

LUKE

REUBEN WELCH

3

BEACON BIBLE EXPOSITIONS



THE NEW TESTAMENT IN TWELVE VOLUMES

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1. Matthew
2. Mark
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4. John
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9. Philippians, Colossians, Philemon
10. Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus
11. Hebrews, James, Peter
12. John, Jude, Revelation

BEACON BIBLE EXPOSITIONS

VOLUME 3

LUKE

by
REUBEN WELCH

Editors
WILLIAM M. GREATHOUSE
WILLARD H. TAYLOR



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Editors' Preface

No Christian preacher or teacher has been more aware of the creating and sustaining power of the Word of God than the Apostle Paul. As a stratagem in his missionary endeavors, he sought out synagogues in the major cities where he knew Jews would gather to hear the Old Testament. No doubt he calculated that he would be invited to expound the Scriptures and so he would have a golden opportunity to preach Christ. That peripatetic preacher was confident that valid Christian experience and living could not be enjoyed apart from the Word of God, whether preached or written. To the Thessalonians he wrote: "And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers" (1 Thess. 2:13, RSV). Strong Christians, and more broadly, strong churches, are born of, and nurtured on, authentic and winsome exposition of the Bible.

Beacon Bible Expositions provide a systematic, devotional Bible study program for laymen and a fresh, homiletical resource for preachers. All the benefits of the best biblical scholarship are found in them, but nontechnical language is used in the composition. A determined effort is made to relate the clarified truth to life today. The writers, Wesleyan in theological perspective, seek to interpret the gospel, pointing to the Living Word, Christ, who is the primary Subject of all scripture, the Mediator of redemption, and the Norm of Christian living.

The publication of this series is a prayerful invitation to both laymen and ministers to set out on a lifelong, systematic study of the Bible. Hopefully these studies will supply the initial impetus.

—WILLIAM M. GREATHOUSE AND
WILLARD H. TAYLOR, *Editors*

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Introduction

In recent years there has been a great increase in the study of Luke-Acts. More and more, Luke is understood not only as a recorder of Gospel events but as a theologian who, through the historical narrative, gives a profound interpretation of the gospel in terms of the age-long purposes of God.

It is important that Luke tells us whom he is writing to and why. Theophilus was probably a Roman of high rank, perhaps a benefactor of the “beloved physician” in some way. It seems clear that Luke did not write to him alone, but to him as representative of the growing group of Gentiles of the Graeco-Roman world who had been converted to Christ.

These relatively new Gentile Christians knew something about the Faith, but needed to have the full story told to fill up their gaps of understanding and round out their comprehension of the great saving purposes of God as revealed in the Scriptures.

The ones to whom Luke wrote did not know the Old Testament and had probably never been to Palestine. They only knew the Gentile church and the growing influence of Rome as the center of Christianity. They faced the pressure of Hellenistic culture and came under the civil law of Rome and probably experienced the ridicule of their associates for their adherence to the beliefs of a despised Jewish sect. So they needed certainty, they needed facts, and they needed perspective.

Luke wrote to meet these needs. All the other books of the New Testament were written to be used inside the Christian community. Luke-Acts was written to supplement the information and understanding of Gentile believers and to clarify the nature of the Christian gospel and the Christian mission to the outside world.

The Message of Luke

1. Luke does this, first, by presenting the story of Jesus in the context of what some writers have called God's “Drama of Redemption.” He sees the Christ event as the central and decisive act in the divine plan of salvation directed by God himself and in which He really acts. The events of the drama reveal God's saving purposes in the world of men.

God's salvation plan begins with the calling of Israel to be His own people and to be the instrument of His saving activity in the world. This era or dispensation closes with the ministry of John the Baptist.

Jesus brings the new order. John the Baptist may be the greatest of the Old, but the least in the Kingdom is greater (7:24-28) because in Jesus the promised salvation has in fact come and in Him the kingdom of God has become present reality. He accomplishes the saving purposes of God by means of suffering servanthood and sacrificial death. His triumphant lordship is manifested through the power of the Resurrection and the giving of the Holy Spirit.

As the Giver of the Spirit, Jesus inaugurates the age of the Church or the dispensation of the Spirit, about which Luke writes in the Book of Acts. His narrative begins with the ministry of the first apostles—especially Peter; then Paul, whose Gentile ministry expresses the divine intent to bring salvation to “the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

In his portrayal of God's plan of salvation or “Drama of Redemption” Luke makes special use of the Old Testament scriptures, strongly linking the saving action of God in the New Testament to His same saving work in the Old Testament.

The first part of the Gospel is filled with the life and faith of old Israel. Zechariah and Elisabeth, Simeon and Anna, Joseph and Mary represent the best of Old Testament faith and life and are shown to be looking for the agelong promise of deliverance to be fulfilled. The beautiful hymns of the birth narratives (1:14-17, 32-35, 46-55, 68-79; 2:29-33) reflect these salvation promises. Fulfillment does not come in the old order; but as it passes away it produces John the Baptist, who comes forth, finally, to renew the prophetic call to repentance and righteousness in preparation for the coming of the Messiah. It is clearly seen that Jesus comes in fulfillment of the promises made under the old covenant.

Jesus himself, at the beginning of His career, interpreted His own ministry in terms of the ancient messianic promise of Isaiah 61 (4:18-19). He declared to the messengers of John that His miracles and message were the expression of the long-promised messianic age (7:22-23; Isa. 29:18-19; 35:56). He understood His death as the means of the inauguration of the new covenant (22:15-20). After the Resurrection, He interpreted the whole of His ministry in terms of the Old Testament scriptures (24:27) and “opened their minds” to “understand the scriptures,” so that they might interpret Him in the same terms (24:45-46). His command to wait in Jerusalem for the outpouring of the Spirit was given in the

context of the Father's promise made in the Old Testament (24:49; Joel 2:28-29).

Here is the perspective and solidarity needed by Theophilus and those he represented. It is the solidarity and perspective we need too. God is the God of history. He is God our Saviour, who is in ultimate control. Our lives find their meaning, not in the crosscurrents of contemporary cultures, but in the ongoing purposes of God, who is working out His redemptive plan within history.

2. Against the background of the historic saving purposes of God revealed through Israel in the Old Testament, Luke portrays the central figure of Jesus. He is God's Servant-Messiah and Son, who at the decisive time in history comes to proclaim that in himself the promised day of salvation has indeed come.

His ministry is characterized in the encounter with His townsmen in the Nazareth synagogue (4:16-30). There He opens up the scroll to Isaiah and reads the prophecy concerning the proclamation of good news to the poor, healing to the brokenhearted, release to the captives, sight to the blind, and liberty to the captives (Isa. 61:1-2). His preaching, His teaching, and His miracles of compassion all bear out the fact that in himself, as the anointed Servant, God's saving presence, promised in these scriptures, is present.

It appears that Luke's concern is not so much to show that Jesus is the Messiah as it is to reveal what kind of Messiah He is. He is the Anointed One (4:18) who from first to last lives His life in obedience to His Father's will. Again and again, Luke refers to the divine compulsion in the ministry of Jesus (2:49; 4:43; 9:22; 13:16, 33; 17:25; 22:37; 24:7, 26, 44). It shows that Jesus knew himself to be the Servant of the divine plan, acting under divine directive and divine authority.

His messianic role was not fulfilled in terms of a political ruler or warrior-king like Israel's David. It was rather expressed in terms of suffering servanthood. Repeated reference is made in the Gospel (1:25, 30-32; 3:4-6, 22; 4: 18-19; 6:20-22; 7:22; 22:37) to the later chapters of Isaiah (40—66), where there emerges the strange figure called "the servant of the Lord." This societal Servant is described as the Bearer of the salvation of God to all peoples. His fulfillment of His role involves hostility and rejection and finally death, but the promise is that the Servant will endure in faithful obedience and triumph at last in the power of God and inaugurate the rule of God.

Luke makes it clear that Jesus interpreted His own ministry in terms of the role of this Suffering Servant of Isaiah. He is the Anointed One who brings salvation by way of suffering love and goes to His triumph by way of the Cross in obedience to His Father's will. He accomplishes His task, not in spite of His

suffering and death, but precisely by means of it. The salvation of God comes to men by means of His own suffering love.

The entire course of the servant-life of Jesus is sustained by prayer and controlled by the Spirit of God. Jesus prayed at His baptism, before the choosing of the Twelve, and at His first prediction of His passion. The Transfiguration was a prayer experience, as were the testing time in the Garden of Gethsemane and His crucifixion. He taught His disciples to pray, prayed for Peter, and urged His disciples to watch and pray. In two famous parables He taught His followers to trustfully and persistently pray, expecting an answer from the Father (11:5-8; 18:1-8).

Through all His life was the controlling presence of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit who spoke through the Old Testament scriptures and the prophets, inspiring the promise of the Messiah, now fulfills the promise through Jesus. Jesus is conceived by the Spirit, filled with the Spirit, proclaims His message in the Spirit, casts out demons by the Spirit, rejoices in the Spirit, and after His resurrection promises the Spirit to His followers. In the Book of Acts, Luke shows how the Spirit continued the work of the risen Messiah in the lives of the disciples and through the living fellowship of the Early Church.

3. The new age inaugurated by the Servant-Messiah, promised beforehand in the Scriptures, is all-inclusive and has worldwide significance. It is precisely because he understands Jesus to be the climax of God's agelong dealings with His people Israel that Luke understands so clearly the universal character of Christ's ministry. God's purpose in the choice of Israel was that through it all nations would be blessed and that it should be *a light to lighten the Gentiles* (2:32). The ministry of John the Baptist prepared for the fulfillment of Isaiah's word that *all flesh shall see the salvation of God* (3:6).

Jesus is both Adam and Israel. He not only fulfills the purposes of God for His chosen people, but, as the New Adam, He is the beginning of the new race, the new creation. The Kingdom He proclaims is a universal Kingdom, incorporating into itself all those who by faith share the life of Christ and who follow in the servant path He has marked out by His own life.

Luke's understanding of the worldwide significance of the gospel does not blind him to the personal needs of individuals who came into personal contact with Jesus. His message is for all and good for all. It is good for the Samaritans, for the Gentiles. It is good for the poor who have none to plead their cause and who trust in God for vindication and deliverance. It is good for the outcasts and sinners, for whom Jesus had special love and appeal. It is good for women, who

had little place of recognition or meaning in that world but for whom the word of Jesus was healing and affirming and worth-giving.

Moreover, the gospel is seen by Luke to penetrate the whole social order. The teachings of Jesus about a disciple's life in the world, given on the journey to Jerusalem (9:51—19:27), and especially the table scenes recorded there (e.g., 11:37-54), show that the Messiah came to live out His life in the real world of men and that His grace and life penetrate every part of man's personal and social life.

4. In all that Luke writes there is intimation and declaration that the purposes of God, promised from of old, actualized in Jesus, and pervading the whole of human life, will reach their consummation in triumph at the end of the age. The Gospel, therefore, is one of joy.

Jesus is the suffering Servant-Messiah who goes to His triumph by way of the Cross. But the triumph is real and the glory is certain because the suffering death is effectual to break the power of Satan's grip and liberate men from his servitude. The glory of Jesus is the glory of a reigning King who is also a Servant. Every breakthrough of that glory into the life of this world—such as that shown in His baptism, His transfiguration, resurrection, and ascension—becomes a promise of the final manifestation of glory at the end of the age. As one writer puts it, Luke sees Jesus not only on the throne of David, but on the throne of the universe!

In the meantime, as the Book of Acts reveals, His disciples and His Church, empowered by His Spirit, are to proclaim His gospel of forgiveness of sins to *all nations* (24:47).

Authorship

Luke's name has been associated with this Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles since the earliest days of the Church. The two books are two parts of a single work and should be read and studied together. Apart from what can be learned from reading Luke-Acts, very little is known about Luke. Paul refers to him as “Luke, the beloved physician” (Col. 4:14), and lists him among his “fellow-labourers” (Philem. 24). He is Paul's loyal companion in Rome, where Paul awaits his martyrdom (2 Tim. 4:11). There are several places in Acts where the narrative changes from “they” did this and that to “we” did this and that (16:10-17; 20:5—21:18; 27:1—28:16). These “we sections” probably reflect the times that Luke, the author, was present with Paul and his company. They indicate that he joined the group in Troas, was with Paul on his last journey to

Jerusalem, undoubtedly was with him through the Caesarean imprisonment, and sailed with him to Rome.

Though Luke's use of medical language in Luke-Acts is not more technical than that used by other educated writers of the time, it is enough to confirm Paul's reference to him as "the beloved physician" (Col. 4:14).

Some scholars in recent years have made a case for identifying Luke with Lucius, the prophet-teacher referred to in Acts 13:1, and perhaps the kinsman of Paul referred to in Rom. 16:21. However, the view has generally prevailed that Luke was a Gentile convert, doctor-companion of Paul, who, with marvelous comprehension of both Hellenistic culture and Old Testament teaching, wrote what Renan called "the most beautiful book in the world."

The right attitude for the reading of this beautiful Gospel is expressed in the ancient prayer for St. Luke's Day:

Almighty God, who calledst Luke the Physician, whose praise is in the gospel, to be an Evangelist and Physician of the soul; May it please thee, that by the wholesome medicine of the doctrine delivered by him, all the diseases of our souls may be healed; through the merits of thy Son Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Christ's Birth and Years in Nazareth

Luke 1:1—4:13

LUKE 1

The Preface

Luke 1:1-4

- 1 Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us,
- 2 Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word;
- 3 It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus,
- 4 That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.

Following the literary custom of his time, Luke prefaced his Gospel with a brief formal introduction. It is clear that he intended it to reach an audience beyond the circle of the Church, conveying a full and accurate account of Jesus the Saviour. This gives it a special significance to contemporary persons who, like Theophilus, have some knowledge, perhaps some instruction, some hearsay facts and “mis-facts” about Jesus. The need was then and is now for fuller understanding, increasing knowledge of the truth about God's saving action in Jesus.

1. This action was not done in a corner. There were many witnesses and, Luke tells us, many recorders of his deeds and words. *Eyewitnesses and ministers* (v. 2, RSV) did not share only personal memories; they were ministers. That is, they were themselves caught up in the reality of what they shared and knew that their word about Jesus had power to meet the deepest human needs and transform the darkest human lives. So it was with Luke. He traced things carefully from the beginning, but the historian had theological concerns and evangelistic compulsions. He knew that in what he wrote there was released *the power of God unto salvation* (Rom. 1:16).
2. Luke wrote about *the things which have been accomplished among us* (v. 1, RSV). The Christ-event—that is, the life, ministry, death, resurrection-exaltation of Jesus—is not simply some wonderful thing that happened a long time ago in a

faraway land. It is the deliberate, purposive, planned doing of God. It is the fulfillment of age-long promises and preparation. There is a unique finality in the Christ event. In Jesus, God has entered the stream of our human history to save and to redeem. In this beautiful Jesus person, of whom Luke writes, God accomplishes our salvation. He does for us what we cannot do for ourselves. It is not our doing; it is His. In sovereign wisdom and mercy, God saves men through what He has done in Jesus.

3. Behind Luke's Gospel is the desire to strengthen and confirm the faith of Theophilus and others like him. The Christian faith is based on definite historical facts, not on speculation or theories. Luke himself had talked and listened and researched carefully the story of Jesus and wrote to fill the need for reliable information.

The Christian Church has always had a remarkable concern for the facts about Jesus. Christian scholars have always been looking, seeking, digging, and discovering. It is because the truth never hides from the light and our faith constantly seeks, not fewer, but more facts. Luke is among the first of a long line of witnesses who understand the need for intelligent Christian defense, and who know the continuing need for thorough, factual proclamation of the Christ event. The answer to inadequate half-truths and half-understandings is clear, solid, factual proclamation of Jesus Christ. As we read Luke's beautiful Gospel of our beautiful Saviour we, like Theophilus, will find our hearts confirmed and faith strengthened. We will learn *how well founded the teaching is that we have received* (v. 4, JB).

The Announcement of the Forerunner

Luke 1:5-25

5 There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth.

6 And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

7 And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years.

8 And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, 9 According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.

10 And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense.

11 And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

12 And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

13 But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth

shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.

14 And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.

15 For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.

16 And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.

17 And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

18 And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man and my wife well stricken in years.

19 And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings.

20 And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.

21 And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple.

22 And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless.

23 And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house.

24 And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying,

25 Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men.

Old Israel's history began when, after 400 years in Egypt, the word of God came to Moses, and the nation was delivered from slavery in the Exodus. Now, centuries later, the word of God is heard again, speaking the message of deliverance to a nation now in the slavery of nationalism and religious legalism. The word came through the angel to Zacharias in the days of Herod the king. That word brought the promise that God was about to act, to deliver not only the nation but all mankind from their enslavement.

Luke gives special attention to historical details in his Gospel, but what he is really concerned to show is the continuity of divine purpose. God acted in the past. Before the coming of Christ, however, there were long and silent years without evident word or deed of God. Luke shows that His work was going on though it could not be seen. It was underground, but it was going on. At last, in the days of Herod, God's work was breaking into the open, revealing itself in the arena of Jewish history and calling for men to prepare His way.

1. The reign of Herod stood in deepest contrast to the piety of Zacharias and Elisabeth. Herod's name was the symbol of corrupt power politics. The priestly couple stood for the best of the Old Testament covenant. Along with Joseph and Mary, Anna and Simeon, they were the contemporary representatives of the host of Old Testament personalities who lived by faith in the promises of God and died without seeing the fulfillment of them (Hebrews 11). They embodied the

faithful remnant that were *looking for the consolation of Israel* (2:25, NASB). In them the old system had done all it could do. Yet, as Maclaren puts it, “there was a crook in their lot.” Zacharias was privileged to perform the priestly function, but he was getting old and his wife was barren. Like Abraham and Sarah, like Elkanah and Hannah, they lived before the Lord blameless and obedient—yet their deepest hopes went unfulfilled. A twisted life pattern and a broken heart need not twist or mar our fellowship with God. It is no sign of disobedience that tragedy comes, nor does our faithful obedience guarantee the fulfillment of our dreams for this life.

It was in the Temple, while Zacharias was performing his once-in-a-lifetime service of sacrifice, that the messenger of God broke into his ritual and answered the cry of his heart. His response was fear, but the angel's word carried the good news, *Fear not* (v. 13). The same word was later spoken to Mary, and to the shepherds, and to us all who tremble in God's sovereign presence. His word always quiets our fears and brings joy to our hearts. Zacharias (whose name means “God has remembered”) and Elisabeth (whose name means “the oath of God”) were to have a child named John (“God is gracious”). God in mercy and grace remembered His oath and demonstrated His faithfulness. Through these devout and faithful servants He acted to bring salvation.

2. The child was to be a forerunner whose purpose was to *make ready a people prepared for the Lord* (v. 17, NASB) and whose spirit and power would reflect that of the prophet Elijah. In him, the voice of authentic prophecy so long silent would speak again to reunite Israel and bring the nation to that same devotion to God the ancient fathers knew. The Kingdom was at hand and the need was for heart preparation, for a people spiritually alive and expectant.

3. The sign given Zacharias was in the form of both assurance and judgment. He would remain silent, even as the covenant people he embodied had no saving voice, no healing word until the time of fulfillment, when words of praise would again break through sealed lips.

The Announcement of the Birth of Jesus

Luke 1:26-45

26 And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, 27 To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

28 And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.

29 And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of

salutation this should be.

30 And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.

31 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.

32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

33 And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

34 Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?

35 And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

36 And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.

37 For with God nothing shall be impossible.

38 And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

39 And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda;

40 And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth.

41 And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the. Holy Ghost:

42 And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.

43 And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

44 For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.

45 And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.

In the birth and infancy narratives Luke brings together both the historical-political-personal situation and the transcendent, divine manifestation. Both Herod and Gabriel are involved in the work of God; and so are Joseph and Mary and Zacharias and Elisabeth; and so are the declarations of the prophets. It is God who acts, but He acts in the field of human history and fulfills His purposes in and through real persons in real life situations. Divine initiative and human response are beautifully portrayed in the account of the angel's visit to Mary with the announcement of the birth of Jesus. God spoke His will through the divine messenger. Mary responded in a simple and sublime act of self-surrender that made possible God's supreme manifestation of himself in Jesus.

1. Gabriel's word to Mary was "*Hail, O favored one, the Lord is with you!*" (v. 28, RSV). What a beautiful and blessed person! Though we do not, as our Roman Catholic friends, consider her to be "full of grace" in the sense of being able to give or confer grace to others, we certainly do look upon her as did Elisabeth: "*Blessed are you among women ... the mother of my Lord*" (vv. 42-43, RSV). God chose this peasant girl to fulfill the hope of every devout Jewish

woman to be the mother of the Deliverer. Her blessedness consisted in this, that, having been chosen as a special instrument of God, she believed the promise and humbly submitted to the divine purpose.

2. Mary's agitation and fear were met with the same divine word spoken to Zacharias, *Fear not* (v. 30). The overshadowing presence of God bringing forth the miracle of the Virgin Birth was, indeed, the occasion for wonder and astonishment, but not for fear. The Holy Child to be born would *be called the Son of God* (v. 35) and His name *JESUS* (v. 31). That name is the Greek form of the Old Testament name Joshua, which means "The Lord saves" or "The Lord is Salvation." Fear is dispelled because, in this Child to be born, God's salvation is revealed. In Him, God's purpose and His promises to save are personalized and offered at the level of our common life.

There were two great Joshuas in the Old Testament, both of whom were instruments of God's saving purposes. The better-known Joshua, son of Nun, led Israel into the Promised Land. Jesus, child of Mary, Son of God, is Leader and Ruler of His people, the Captain of their salvation (Heb. 2:10), effecting their deliverance, leading them into the promised rest (Heb. 4:1-11).

The other Joshua was high priest under Zerubbabel at the time of the deliverance from exile and the return to the Promised Land and the rebuilding of the Temple (Ezra 2:2 ff.). Zechariah the prophet saw this Joshua in a vision, accused by Satan, vindicated by God, and given authority to rule the house of God, and given the promise that God would remove the guilt of the land. So this greater Joshua, Son of God, our High Priest, takes away our guilt, intercedes for us, and rules over the house of God. What other name could He bear? In Him the salvation of God is revealed. All that is implied in Jesus the name is brought to fulfillment in Jesus the Person. He perfectly bears the name and perfectly fulfills the name.

3. The angel Gabriel's message to Mary included a twofold proclamation of greatness for Jesus. His was to be a greatness of relationship to God. Jesus is the Son of God; not the greatest of the human greats, not someone like God or close to God, but Son of God. The term does not refer to a particular role or temporary task but rather to the essential relationship of this Incarnate One to the eternal God. He is in absolute, unique oneness with the Father, sharing His essential nature.

His was to be the greatness of kingly power (v. 32), promised in the Old Testament to the Messiah-King of David's line (2 Sam. 7:14; Ps. 2:7; 89:26-27).

His kingship will never pass away; it will endure for all eternity. This can be so because the Son is like His Father. The One who rules is the Eternal One who saves, the Mighty One who preserves and delivers.

4. How beautiful the response of Mary to the overwhelming word of the divine messenger: a profound act of submission and surrender by which she became the tabernacle of the Holy Spirit! In her humility she opposed the pride of Eve, and in her selfless obedience she became the one through whom the ancient promise made to Eve was finally fulfilled (Gen. 3:15).

The Magnificat—Mary's Response

Luke 1:46-56

46 And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, 47 And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.
48 For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.
49 For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name.
50 And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.
51 He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
52 He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.
53 He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.
54 He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy;
55 As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.
56 And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house.

Mary's hymn response to the salutation of Elisabeth took the form of a psalm of praise to God for His power, His holiness, His mercy, and His faithfulness.

1. It is based to a large degree upon the song of Hannah after the birth of Samuel (1 Sam. 1:11; 2:1-10) and is composed almost entirely of Old Testament psalms. The movement of thought is from the goodness of God shown to Mary as an individual to the mercy of God shown to Israel in fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham (Gen. 12:2-3).

Even as God chose Mary, a poor and obscure village maiden, as the mother of the Saviour and exalted her so that all generations would call her blessed, so God chose Israel, a poor and obscure, despised nation, and through her brought salvation to all the world.

2. In this hymn, Mary represents the highest and best hopes of Judaism. Dominant in her thinking is the theme of deliverance by the new and mighty act of God, fulfilling aspirations both personal and national, both political and spiritual. The Church has always seen in this hymn of praise the expression of

the kind of salvation that God accomplished in the person of Jesus. The great of earth do not welcome it because it strikes at human pride and self-sufficiency. It exalts those of low degree, reverses human value systems and ego-centered life-style. It breaks into the status quo with revolutionary, life-changing power. But it exalts the humble; it fills the hungry; it remembers mercy and covenant, and moves us toward the Kingdom where God is Sovereign.

The Birth of John

Luke 1:57-80

57 Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son.
58 And her neighbours and her cousins heard how the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her.
59 And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father.
60 And his mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called John.
61 And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name.
62 And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called.
63 And he asked for a writing table, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marvelled all.
64 And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God.
65 And fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judaea.
66 And all they that heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be! And the hand of the Lord was with him.
67 And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, 68 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, 69 And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David;
70 As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began;
71 That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us;
72 To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant;
73 The oath which he swore to our father Abraham, 74 That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, 75 In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.
76 And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways;
77 To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, 78 Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, 79 To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.
80 And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel.

1. Beneath the narrative of the promise and birth of John Baptist there lies a profound understanding of the history of Israel and the nature of the old covenant. The word of the angel came to Zacharias in the Temple at the time of sacrifice. Representing the best of the old dispensation, Zacharias and Elisabeth were yet barren, and Zacharias was dumb. They symbolized in themselves the

aging, ineffectual body of the old covenant, unfruitful, unable to speak, yet by the mercy of God producing John Baptist, born, as it were, out of the womb of the Temple, so long silent and sterile. The whole of the old covenant came to its climax in John, the last fruit of the old dispensation. The most the old could do was point to the Coming One.

2. The hymn of Zacharias (the “Benedictus”) at the birth of John reveals the quality of his heart's meditation on the Jewish scriptures during the long months of silence. He gathered up in praise all the echoes of Israel's faith and hope. A common theme runs through the songs of Mary, Zacharias, and Simeon in chapters 1 and 2. It is the theme of the trust of the “poor” in Israel in the triumph of God and His salvation wrought in their behalf. It is the salvation theme, promised from of old. God, in fulfillment of His promise, visits His people, bringing them both individual and social salvation. God comes into the arena of the human struggle to deliver His people from their enemies. He comes to free them from sin and fear and enable them to serve Him in holiness and righteousness. The child of Zacharias and Elisabeth was destined to prepare the way and proclaim the coming sunrise.

3. The climax of the passage is the word, “That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life” (1:74-75).

God fulfills His covenantal purposes for His people through a mighty act of deliverance. It is a deliverance that makes possible the free and fearless service of God in sanctity and integrity through all the flow of daily life.

God has acted in Christ in fulfillment of His covenant. That action carries a double benefit.

a. It brings deliverance *from the hand of our enemies* (v. 74). Zacharias, no doubt, had in mind both national and personal deliverance. Israel had for centuries chafed under the oppression of foreign nations. But the prophet was no zealot. He looked to God not only for freedom from the nation's oppressors but also for deliverance from the great enemies of sin and death.

The promise is deliverance; it is freedom. It is the creation of a people, a new Israel, free from bondage without and within. God fulfills His covenant with a power that, as one writer put it, can “cleanse the conscience that has been defiled and break the octopus grip that sin has upon the soul.”

*He breaks the pow'r of cancelled sin,
He sets the pris'ner free.*

b. This deliverance creates a people who, without fear, are enabled to serve God in “holiness and righteousness” through the whole of the covenant life.

The old covenant was fulfilled in the deliverance of Israel from the bondage of Egypt. Its intent was the formation of a people of God's own possession, a people bound to Him in loyalty and love, to whom He could speak and through whom He could speak to the whole world.

The covenant created a servant people, bound to God in covenant love, delivered by Him from their enemies, belonging to Him, devoted to Him as their Deliverer, and dedicated to His purposes. Israel had no existence apart from the call of God, the word that brought the nation into being. It was God who called Abraham and gave him the promise. It was God who called Moses on the wilderness mount and said to him, “Tell old Pharaoh, let My people go.” It was God who broke the power of the mighty deities of Egypt, embodied in their Pharaohs, and led Israel with marvels and great wonders out of that land, through the waters, and into the wilderness. It was God who initiated the covenant-making encounter at Mount Sinai and made Israel into His own people. Without Him, Israel was nothing. Israel's existence was determined by its relation to God and nothing else.

The nation's holiness consisted in its devotement to that relationship and its obedience to the covenant demands implicit in it. It also consisted in its devotement to the purposes of God for which the nation had been called into being.

That is what holiness still means. Zechariah declares that the ancient promise to Abraham would be fulfilled in the new people of God. “In the fulness of the time” (Gal. 4:4), a new covenant is inaugurated, grounded in God's own redemptive entrance into the stream of human history. It sets men free from sin and death and fear and calls them anew to the service of God. It both demands and makes possible a service to God *in holiness and righteousness*.

Like old Israel, the new Israel, the Church, has no existence of its own. It is called into being by the initiating God. It was God who came in His Son in the Incarnation. It was God who in Christ accomplished the great deliverance of the Cross, breaking the awesome power of sin and Satan and death and hell. It was God who called out the Church (the *ecclesia*, the “called-out ones”) and endued it with His own Spirit. Apart from Him the Church is nothing.

The holiness of the Church consists not only in its moral purity, but in its devotement to the God who called it into unique relationship to himself. Its

holiness is not something it possesses, like an inheritance or a gift. It is rather its continual attentiveness to and its perpetual dependency upon God. The Church lives in the world but it is not of the world (John 17:14). Its life is not in itself or in anything it possesses, but in God.

The Church's holiness also consists in its devotement to the task for which it is called into being. Even as the Father sanctified the Son and sent Him into the world (John 10:36), so the Son sanctified himself, that is, consecrated or devoted himself to the task to which His Father had devoted Him (John 17:19). The Son, in turn, sanctifies His disciples, His Church, and sends them into the world (John 17:18) to fulfill the purposes of the One who called them to himself. The new Israel, the Church, is the holy people of God, devoted to God and to the purposes of God as His servant people. They are “marked with the seal of consecration,” God-centered, God-dependent, and God-sent.

Zechariah indicates that the holiness and righteousness of God's new people find expression in the flow of the common life (1:75). The deliverance that creates the people of God is accomplished by One who came into the world as a baby to grow and live real life among us. The people thus created are called to be His holy people in the real life among men, performing the mercies, remembering the covenant (v. 72), serving *without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life* (vv. 74-75).

LUKE 2

The Birth of Jesus

Luke 2:1-7

- 1 And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.
- 2 (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)
- 3 And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.
- 4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)
- 5 To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.
- 6 And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.
- 7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

A hundred fairy tales begin with the words, “A long time ago in a faraway country lived a beautiful maiden.” It was a long time ago, and in a far country,

that a beautiful maiden gave birth to a wondrous Child; but Luke takes pains to show that God entered into the truly historical, truly human situation in Jesus Christ. He has no concern for make-believe stories nor symbolic fables. He has intense care for the facts of history and for the work of God within them.

God's work expressed in this sublime paragraph is the Incarnation. That is the truth carried in the narrative of the birth of Jesus. The Christian doctrine of the Incarnation means that "the Divine Son, who from all eternity is God in the same full sense that the Creator Father and the Holy Spirit are divine, completely and permanently joined himself to our genuine human nature, so as to form one real person who was at once both fully divine and fully human. In this way God joined himself to the human race, his handiwork, and lived a real human life in this world" (John Lawson, *Comprehensive Handbook for Christian Doctrine*, p. 49). This means that the birth of Jesus was not the result of the sexual union of Joseph and Mary, but the operation of the Holy Spirit upon our Lord's mother, who became pregnant while still a virgin. Jesus did not originate from human generation. Like the Christian, He was born, *not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God* (John 1:13).

God comes into our world, not like a bomb, but like a baby; not to destroy, but to give new life. His coming is salvation, but it is also judgment upon our human self-sufficiency. Man in his maleness, in his drive and responsibility for propagating and directing the human race, falls into the background, weak as Joseph. Not mankind in his strength and virility, but mankind in his weakness, represented by the Virgin Mary, is the instrument of God's saving action.

That saving action is "into" our history, not merely "upon" it. By coming in birth, Jesus enters, "gets inside" our human history, and saves us from within, with life that comes from God! God did not choose to work through the "greats" of our land, or through the scientific breakthroughs of men of genius. He came from the back hill country of a small, conquered land in the Middle East long before we learned what progress meant!

George Buttrick in his book *God, Pain and Evil* tells of a cartoon somewhere showing a neighbor of the Hanks family talking to the owner of a crossroads store in the back country of Kentucky. The storekeeper asked, "Anything new?" "No," said the other man from his horse and buggy, "Nancy Hanks got a young-un, but nothing ever happens up our creek."

Well, our whole world has grown tired and old and sick. Anything new? Yes! Mary of Nazareth got herself "a Young-un," and the whole world's new!

The world was lost

*But Christ was born.
Rejoice, O Christendom!*

1. It made a difference that Caesar Augustus needed taxes from his subject nation when Cyrenius was governor of Syria. It made a difference to all those who had to make the journey to their native towns, declare their goods, tighten their belts, and pay more taxes. It made a difference to the innkeeper that the town was flooded with new people. It made a difference to Joseph and Mary that there was no room for them in the inn. But what made the real difference, the thing of supreme importance, was what happened in the stable that night. The birth in that stable was destined to affect the lives and the kingdoms of the whole world. Augustus, like Cyrus of old (Isa. 44:28), was the unknowing co-worker with God in the accomplishment of His people's deliverance.

2. *There was no room for them in the inn* (v. 7). *He was in the world ... and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not* (John 1:10-11). Pushed aside, unrecognized, there was scarcely a tremor in the movement of the world when He came. But He came, came all the way into our human situation at its worst with a coming as irreversible as pregnancy, as irrevocable as birth.

G. Campbell Morgan quotes these words from an old book: "The unfathomable depths of the Divine Counsels were moved. The fountains of the deep were broken up; the healing of the nations was issuing forth; but nothing was seen on the surface of human society but this slight rippling of the water." That slight ripple was destined to circle ever more widely and become ever more great, till it would circle the whole world as the strong waves of God to crash the very gates of hell!

The Sign to the Shepherds

Luke 2:8-20

8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

12 And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, 14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

15 And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

16 And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

17 And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

18 And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

19 But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

There were in the same country shepherds (v. 8). To some of us the words are so familiar that they have lost their astonishment. Of course there were shepherds in that country, but that is nothing. What is something is that there were kings and governors and princes and lawyers and priests and bankers. There were palaces and courts and decision-making conference rooms; there were big names and influential powers.

But the birth of Jesus, that “slight ripple” on the surface of earth's history, was undeclared, unannounced, and unnoticed by all these. Instead, the angels of God proclaimed the news to shepherds. They weren't even considered part of the “in” group because their work in the hills kept them from the religious ceremonies in town.

Perhaps as he wrote, Luke was remembering the words his apostle companion wrote to the Corinthian church:

For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

For consider your call, brethren; not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth; but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong, God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption; therefore, as it is written, “Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord” (1 Cor. 1:25-31, RSV).

Luke's inclusion of this part of the birth narrative reflects his concern for the salvation of all mankind: for the poor, the outcasts, the have-nots. The shepherds in the hills heard angels proclaim God's salvation through One who was himself a Shepherd, the Good Shepherd who gives His life for the sheep (John 10:11) and who rejoices when the lost is found (Luke 15:4-7).

1. In David's City the long-awaited promise was fulfilled; the newborn Child was to be Saviour. In this word is really the “why” of it all. We are a fallen race; a sinful, lost people who need a Saviour. We need One who saves from sin and danger and death and gives true life and blessedness. God comes to us in Jesus to be this One to us. That is why we need not fear, but may rejoice at His coming.

All God's dealings with us are saving, lifting, healing dealings. He is the saving God who saves through the anointed Person of His own choosing, His only Son, our sovereign Lord.

2. Suddenly the *multitude of the heavenly host* (v. 13) broke into a hymn of praise. *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased* (v. 14, NASB). The highest grace of heaven and the lowest depth of earth are brought together in this angelic hymn. In this supreme saving revelation in Christ, God is glorified in fulfilling His word and bringing peace to men on earth. This “*Savior, who is Christ the Lord,*” (v. 11, RSV) brings true peace to men's inner lives as they are brought into right relationship to God and into harmony with one another. It means more than absence of conflict; it means harmony of the entire life. Insofar as Christ's saving lordship is recognized and accepted, His peace rules, His harmony prevails both in the inner life and in society. Apart from Him, as our dark history tragically reveals, is not peace, but war and strife and restlessness and rebellion.

So His peace belongs to those who are the objects of His pleasure. That is, those in whom God's goodwill and pleasure are being worked out. His peace cannot be achieved by our own efforts. Any likeness to God's own inner harmony in us must come from Him as the gift of His grace and favor. That grace gift from God comes through a Person, God himself among us. *Peace I leave with you ...* (John 14:27).

3. Sometimes, the day after Christmas, the glow of Christmas Eve and the joy of Christmas Day seem but a dream as life moves quickly back to normal. However, the angelic visit granted the shepherds and their worship at the manger made real and profound changes in their lives. The experience passed, but the reality remained. They returned, praising God and telling the good news! Able to live in newness because the reality was not the memory, but the saving power of God entering our world in a Person, with us *to the close of the age* (Matt. 28:20, RSV).

The Circumcision and Presentation of Jesus

Luke 2:21-38

21 And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

22 And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord;

23 (As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;)

24 And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.
 25 And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.
 26 And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.
 27 And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought In the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, 28 Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, 29 Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word:
 30 For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, 31 Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;
 32 A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.
 33 And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him.
 34 And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against;
 35 (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.
 36 And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity;
 37 And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.
 38 And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

The center of interest in this section is the word of Simeon, who gives in his psalm of thanksgiving and prophecy a sort of summary of the meaning of the gospel. The old and the new dispensations are seen in the closest relationship and yet the old gives way to the new. The gospel comes out of Judaism and fulfills it. It also transcends it, bringing both *light ... to Gentiles* and *glory to Israel* (v. 32). The mission of Jesus has judging and saving significance for both Israel and the world.

1. Five times in this passage it is explicitly stated that the rituals observed by Joseph and Mary were according to the law (vv. 22, 23, 24, 27, 39). There were three ceremonies prescribed by the law relating to birth of a boy. The first was circumcision on the eighth day (Lev. 12:3), as the sign of the covenant, symbolizing entrance into the covenant community. It was his identification with his people. In faithful obedience Joseph and Mary had the Child circumcised and gave Him the name Jesus, as commanded by the angel (1:31). This first shedding of Jesus' blood was symbolic of an identification with His people far more profound than either Joseph or Mary could imagine. The first step in the fulfillment of His name (Jesus = Salvation) was accomplished. God works His salvation, not by magic from outside our needs, but from within our race, becoming one with us, taking to himself the deepest realities of our human

situation.

The second ceremony was consecration or presentation of the child to God (Exod. 13:2). How often that which is *called holy to the Lord* (v. 23) is only called holy! This male that opened the womb, dedicated to God, this “redeemed” Redeemer, was indeed *holy to the Lord*, and all His life lived in obedient devotion that fully expressed the meaning of His presentation.

The third ceremony was the purification of Mary, who was, after giving birth, ceremonially unclean and unable to enter into the worship of the community until after 40 days and until the ritual of purification had been performed (Leviticus 12). The normal offering was a lamb for a burnt offering and a pigeon for a sin offering. Provision was made, however, for the poor who could not afford the sacrifice (Lev. 12:8). It was this offering of the poor that Mary brought, two young pigeons. From His birth, Jesus experienced the meaning of poverty, and throughout His life showed special understanding of and compassion for the poor. His concern was not theoretical; He himself knew what it was to be poor. He also knew that we all are poor and cannot save ourselves or meet our own needs from our own resources.

In all this, Luke was careful to show that Jesus was brought up in strict accordance with Jewish law. He was born of a woman, born under the law (Gal. 4:4). He was *made like His brethren in all things* (Heb. 2:17, NASB), *God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh* (Rom. 8:3). This is the path along which Jesus traveled in the accomplishment of our redemption.

2. In the providence of God, the best of the old dispensation and the Bearer of the new dispensation met in the Temple. An old man's dreams were fulfilled and a young Child's preparation was begun. Simeon and Anna represent the best of the old dispensation. Their loyalty to the law had not made them legalists or casuists. It had rather produced in them a deep and lasting hope. He was *waiting for the consolation of Israel* (v. 25). Anna spoke *to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem* (v. 38). They had discerned the meaning of the law and so were prepared and eagerly expecting the coming of the gospel.

3. The old man was ready, now, to die because he had seen with his own eyes the Child who would bring the promised salvation of God.

a. This salvation will bring *light to lighten the Gentiles* (v. 32; Isa. 42:6-7; 49:6-7). It was always God's intention for His people that they become a servant people through whom all the nations of earth would be blessed. Though for the most part Israel rejected this servant calling and turned inward to preserve

herself, there were those who, like Simeon, saw clearly the real destiny of Israel in bringing light to all the peoples of earth.

b. The salvation brought by the Child will be the *glory of ... Israel* (v. 32). Israel's true glory is that from her comes God's salvation (John 4:22) and that through her salvation should come to all the world.

c. Simeon's prophecy to Mary reveals the old saint's profound understanding of the way God's salvation is to be revealed. He is the first to see what is later fully expounded by the risen Lord (Luke 24:25-27), that the Messiah's role is one of suffering, *a sign which shall be spoken against* (v. 34).

The kind of salvation He brings is not welcomed by everyone. Jesus bring the judgment of crisis and decision. Men will be brought face-to-face with God's redemption, their real selves will be revealed, and they will rise or fall according to their response. In the midst is the sword, symbol of Mary's mother-suffering and Jesus' Redeemer-suffering. And so "the child grew."

Jesus in the Temple

Luke 2:39-52

39 And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.

40 And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.

41 Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover.

42 And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast.

43 And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it.

44 But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance.

45 And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him.

46 And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.

47 And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.

48 And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.

49 And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?

50 And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.

51 And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.

52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

This passage begins a series of episodes in which Jesus is prepared for His ministry and in which the nature of His messiahship is set forth. At age 12 the Lord reflected His growing awareness of His unique relation to the Father (2:

41-52). John the Baptist witnessed to His role as Messiah (3:1-20); God confirmed His sonship and messiahship at the baptism (3:21 f.); the genealogy further testified to His messiahship (3:23-38). And the Temptation clarified and strengthened Jesus' commitment to His Father's purposes (4:1-13).

1. After the presentation of Jesus in the Temple, the family returned to Nazareth and the Child grew and developed (vv. 40-52). His growth in wisdom probably refers to religious insight as well as general understanding. It was evidently fairly obvious that God's grace was with Him in His growing years. Yet every intimation here is that the growth of Jesus was in every way very normal. The human influences that played upon His development were the same ones that are active in every normal person's growth. The home relations, the instruction of His parents, nature, school, synagogue, the Scriptures, the rural society—all of these made their contribution to His development. And all of them came out naturally in the illustrations He later used in His preaching.

2. Luke is the only Gospel writer to tell us any details of the growing years of Jesus, and he gives only one significant incident: the time when His parents found Him in the Temple discussing with the teachers. It certainly is not enough to satisfy our curiosity, but it is enough to reveal something of what was going on in the inner life of Jesus. As a baby things had happened to Him and words of profound significance had been spoken over Him. He did not understand them at the time. In His growing years He began to understand and experience in himself the meaning of those sacred words and acts.

3. The family went to Jerusalem for Passover; it probably was the time for Jesus' *Bar Mitzvah*, the time when He became a “son of the law.” Who knows the reaches of thought, the depth of feeling in the mind and heart of our Lord during those days? He came to know himself as the “son of the law”; but more, He was growing in the awareness of himself as the Son of God in a unique sense.

4. This is shown in Jesus' special insight in His discussion with the teachers of the law. The episode bears witness to Jesus' growing wisdom in the ways of His Father. It is also shown in Jesus' response to the anxious chiding of His mother. She said, *Thy father and I have sought thee* (v. 48). Jesus used the same word with different reference when He replied, “I must be about my Father's business” (v. 49). This play on words cannot be accidental. Luke intends to show Jesus' growing self-awareness as the Son of God. It is surely too much to say that Jesus at age 12 knew fully who He was and what was the task to which He was called. It appears that this “messianic consciousness” came to Him gradually during the

quiet years at home in Nazareth. Full revelation and full self-awareness came at His baptism, but Luke opens for us a window on this process and lets us see the developing inner life of the Saviour.

5. Whatever self-awareness He had, it did not make Him proud or vain. He went home and was subject to His parents, continuing to grow *in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man* (v. 52).

LUKE 3

The Ministry of John

Luke 3:1-20

1 Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, 2 Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.

3 And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins;

4 As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness. Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

5 Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth;

6 And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

7 Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

8 Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

9 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

10 And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then?

11 He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.

12 Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do?

13 And he said unto them. Exact no more than that which is appointed you.

14 And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.

15 And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not;

16 John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire:

17 Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable.

18 And many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people.

19 But Herod the tetrarch, being reproved by him for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, 20 Added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison.

The mention of Rome's Caesar and Palestine's governors and Judah's priests reveal Luke's concern to show the working of God in the field of human history. These men were ruling, but in and over all God was ruling, and actually broke into the human scene to accomplish His saving purpose for men.

1. A part of that purpose was the preparation of Israel through the person of John Baptist. At the dawning of the new dispensation the last and greatest of the prophets appeared on the scene. God does not visit His people without declaring and preparing for His coming. Every crisis in Israel's history was preceded by some interpretive word from God. Moses declared and interpreted the meaning of the Exodus from Egypt. Samuel interpreted the monarchy; Amos declared the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple; both Isaiah and Ezekiel interpreted the return from exile. Now Israel was on the threshold of a new day and God sent John to declare the Word and interpret the times.

2. It is significant that John emerged from the wilderness, the desolate scrubland on the fringe of southern Palestine. It was in the wilderness that God brought Israel into covenant relationship with himself. The wilderness period of Israel's history was a time of total dependence upon God and so became a symbol of Israel's golden age. There was expectation on the part of many that in the "last days" or "end time" God would again draw Israel out into the wilderness for a new covenant, a new beginning (Hos. 2:14). The Essene and Qumran communities had left society with its evils and had gone into the wilderness to prepare for the coming of God's victory. Some thought that the Messiah would come from the wilderness. John identified himself as *A voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord* (John 1:23, NASB; Isa. 40:3).

All that was meant by Israel's ancient dependency and obedience to God, all that was implied in the hope for renewed purification, all that was feared of the judgment of God, and all that was wrapped up in the hopes of Israel for new beginning—all this was gathered up and embodied in the bold and penetrating ministry of John in the wilderness. No wonder the crowds massed around him!

3. John's task as forerunner was the preparation of the people of God for the inbreak of the Kingdom. This was accomplished through his message and his baptism. It was commonly believed that, before the coming of the great day of the Lord, the voice of authentic prophecy would again be heard in Israel. That voice broke out when *the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in*

the wilderness (v. 2). Looking like Elijah and sounding like Amos, he thundered judgment, preached repentance, and baptized the penitent in a kind of sacrament of preparation. In view of the fact that God's visitations are always preceded by times and words of preparation, the work of John has significance for all time.

a. The burden of his message was the judgment of God. Like the great prophets before him, he declared that God's visitation is always a judgment upon our false hopes and false dependencies. The Jews leaned upon a long-privileged line of pedigreed ancestry, but John's clear vision saw the fallacy. God judges our false dependencies and calls us to repent, to return to Him. Heritage, self-sufficiency, religious life-style, and proper spiritual decorum all fall to the axe of God. We are called to come back to total dependency, total honesty; no claims except His righteousness.

b. This new repentance was symbolized in baptism. It expressed moral cleansing and entrance into the new community—the new people of God to whom Messiah would be revealed.

c. John also proclaimed a simple, yet significant ethic. It was no new morality, no revolutionizing ethical ideal or exciting life-style. It was actually the plain call to live right!

To the crowds: Be generous and share.

To the tax collectors: Be fair.

To the soldiers: No bullying, no blackmail; make do with your pay.

4. Nothing profound here—or is there?

How do we prepare for the visitation of God? What is that great thing we must do to ready ourselves for the divine invasion?

a. Return in repentance to full and total dependence upon God. *Do not begin to say to yourselves, We have ...* (v. 8, NASB). We have nothing!

b. Raise up the ethical standards! Don't cheat, be fair, do right.

The word is as old as the prophets; as surely effectual as the promises of God. There is a way to prepare for the Divine Presence! Return to right dependency, return to right living!

5. All times are significant in the ongoing economy of God. But all times do not have the same “saving” significance. There are times of special visitation, times of crucial meaning. Times such as the migration of Abraham, the exodus from Egypt, the establishment of the monarchy, the judgment of the Exile, and the return to Jerusalem are the key times in God's saving history. The supreme time was the coming of Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

In God's ordering of these times of visitation the element of preparation is always crucial. God prepares men and calls for men to engage in preparation for His visitation.

At the completion of the Temple, God said to Solomon:

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land (2 Chron. 7:14).

Just before the fall of Samaria, Hosea cried out to Israel:

Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground; for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you (Hos. 10:12).

In these ancient calls to preparation for God's visitation there is expressed precisely the same clear call voiced by John Baptist: Return! Reform! Repent! Live right! Right dependency! Right deportment!

6. John's message, however, was more than a word of judgment and a call to repentance and reform symbolized in a baptism of water. His specific declaration was that the Messiah was coming to inaugurate the new age and would baptize with the Holy Spirit those who responded.

He describes the Spirit as the Divine Fire present in the world, the Holy Flame of the Spirit, or the “spirit of burning” (cf. Mal. 3:2).

More than human reform is involved in the new age. God's required preparation is met by God's response in the burning presence of the Holy Spirit, bequeathed through His own Son. What John declared could scarcely be other than the fulfillment of the ancient prophecies that God would pour out His Spirit on His restored people (Isa. 44:3; Ezek. 36:26-27; Joel 2:28). His words almost precisely fulfill the declaration of Isaiah that in the messianic age “the spirit of judgment, and ... the spirit of burning” would cleanse both Zion and its people (Isa. 4:4).

The baptism with the Spirit operates like fire to purge the chaff and cleanse the wheat. Christ brings the new age of the Kingdom, the new life of God. To receive His judgment in the spirit of repentance prepares for the reception of His Holy Spirit as the Holy Fire of cleansing. To refuse means ultimately to experience the fires of destruction. The fire consumes the sin and it consumes the sinner who holds to his sin.

The Baptism of Jesus

Luke 3:21-22

21 Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened,

22 And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.

Jesus had been identified with His people as a baby in fulfillment of the law's requirements. In submission to baptism at the hands of John, He deliberately identified himself with the people He came to save and was inaugurated into His public ministry by the confirmation of the Father and the filling of the Holy Spirit.

What drew Jesus to John's baptism? What were His thoughts as He hung His carpenter's tools on the wall for the last time? How did it feel to leave His Nazareth house knowing He could never really go home again? In what John was doing, Jesus saw the work of God and He knew His time had come.

John's baptism was one of *repentance for the remission of sins* (v. 3). The sinless Christ submitted to it, not because He had need of forgiveness, but because He deeply identified himself with those He came to save. He took His place in the lineup; stood in the long line and, like the person in front of Him and the one behind, He let John bury Him in baptism (Rom. 6:4). In this action He was actually fulfilling the preaching of John. John had said to the crowds (was Jesus among them?), *Begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father* (v. 8). In submitting to baptism Jesus was indeed laying aside His heritage (Phil. 2:6-7) and submitting himself to the will and purpose of His Father. Luke indicates that Jesus was praying. What else would He be praying but, *Not my will, but thine, be done* (22:42)?

In each Synoptic Gospel it is indicated that there were three elements in the baptism experience: The heavens were opened, the Holy Spirit descended, and the voice of the Father was heard. The opening of the heavens probably signified that the experience was from God and not from man. More was involved than human actions on earth. Heaven was open; God was moving, acting, and opening up the way for the descent of the Spirit.

Jesus, promised by the Spirit, conceived by the Spirit, was filled with the Spirit at His baptism, and now does His work by the power of the Spirit (4:14). He rejoiced in the Spirit (10:21) and promised the Spirit to His followers (11:13; 24:4a). It is clear that Jesus lived His life in the joy and power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit He promised to us is that same Holy Spirit in whom He lived and loved and worked and rejoiced. It is in fact His own Spirit He gives us, the Spirit with which He was filled at His baptism.

The third element was the voice of the Father. Most scholars agree that the words Jesus heard at His baptism are parts of two Old Testament passages, each

having profound significance for Him.

a. The first one is from Ps. 2:7, a messianic psalm, a coronation psalm for the king of Israel. *Thou art my beloved Son* (3:22). Through the years Jesus' inner awareness of himself as the unique Son of God had been growing. Now at baptism the Father's voice seals and crowns this inward relationship. Thus Jesus moved into His ministry knowing who He was—the Messiah, the Son of God.

b. The other word Jesus heard was from Isa. 42:1. This Old Testament passage is the beginning of the “Servant Songs” in Isaiah that speak of the Suffering Servant of the Lord. The “Songs” climax in chapter 53, where it is clearly revealed that God accomplishes His redeeming work by means of suffering servanthood and sacrificial self-giving. Jesus understood himself to be that Suffering Servant.

The two great issues of Jesus' life were answered at His baptism: Who am I? What is the nature of My task?

He left the waters of Jordan, filled with the Spirit, knowing himself to be the Son of God and knowing that the ministry was to be one of suffering love as the Servant of the Lord. These are the great realities that were to be severely tested in the wilderness of temptation.

Genealogy

Luke 3:23-38

23 And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli, etc.

At first look, Luke's placement of the genealogy seems to interrupt the flow of his narrative, separating as it does the baptism and temptation. However, the genealogy has a definite purpose in his Gospel. It is not included merely as an accommodation to Jewish concern for heritage, nor simply to list Jesus' earthly ancestry. Luke does not place the genealogy within the birth and infancy narratives, but among the episodes which show the messiahship of Jesus and the character of His ministry. In some ways the genealogy is a commentary on the baptism of Jesus. This One who is filled with the Spirit and declared to be the Son of God is no mystery man or mythical half-god; He is a real Person with a family tree. Luke traces the lineage back to David, giving evidence for the messiahship of Jesus, and he runs the line on back to Adam and to God. Jesus' ties are not only to Israel—but to all humanity. He comes as the new Adam (Rom. 5:12-21), bringing new beginning to the whole human race.

1. We know that Matthew (1:1) traces the lineage of Jesus back to Abraham and

is concerned with purposes of the nation of Israel in the plan of God. Luke, however, with his emphasis on the universal scope of the gospel, shows Jesus as Saviour of the whole of mankind and Representative of the whole of mankind.

2. The genealogy also shows how the sovereign purposes of God are intimately related to persons on the field of human history. God promises, and brings to fulfillment His promises. He does it through real people who have babies and who pass on the faith from generation to generation. Luke traces the line back to Adam. How many world empires rose and fell while that line of faith kept lengthening? How many world powers exercised their authority and faded away, as another child was born who kept the faith and passed on the heritage? The line zigzags, sometimes reverses, but always its final movement is forward. God finds men and women whom He can use to fulfill His will. And earthly kingdoms rise and fall! The line of faith, that line of real persons, is never broken!

3. The genealogy climaxes and closes with Jesus. From that time on, there is no more concern for genealogy in the New Testament. We know little about the ancestry of Peter or John or Paul. Because in Christ there is a new creation, a new humanity, based not on our father and grandfather but upon our Heavenly Father and our Elder Brother, whose life we share, whose bloodline we are privileged by grace to inherit. We are brothers in the family of God, who look not to *our* past but to *His* future.

LUKE 4

The Temptation of Jesus

Luke 4:1-13

1 And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,

2 Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered.

3 And the devil said unto him. If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.

4 And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.

5 And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

6 And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it.

7 If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine.
8 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.
9 And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence:
10 For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee:
11 And in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.
12 And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.
13 And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season.

The temptation experience is intimately related to the baptism; it is, in fact, a sequel to it. Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, conscious of His unique relation to God and of His unique vocation as Suffering Servant, and conscious of new powers. How shall He use these powers? How shall He fulfill His ministry? How shall He exercise the authority of His sonship? These were the profound issues faced in the wilderness. There were three episodes in the temptation experience, but underneath there appear to be two fundamental temptations.

1. The first episode was the temptation to turn stones into bread, a temptation which would have had no meaning were Jesus not conscious of new power. Forty days earlier Jesus had heard the words of His Father, *Thou art my beloved Son* (3:22). He now heard another voice, *If thou be the Son of God* (v. 3). Suddenly the scene in the Garden of Eden comes into view. There, in the valley of plenty, Eve heard the same insinuating question, *Yea, hath God said ... ?* (Gen. 3:1).

The two situations have much in common. Our first parents, in the midst of beauty and abundance, were tempted to doubt the word and will of their Creator, to doubt the character of their relationship to their Maker. Our Elder Brother, in the bleak and barren wilderness, was tempted to doubt the validity of His relationship to His Father. His Father had said, *Thou art my Son*, or had He? That was many days ago; now hunger and loneliness and inner turmoil are the great realities. Echoing through His mind is the chilling word “If.” But Jesus was faithful—that is, full of faith in the word of God. He trusted the Father's declaration and not the adversary's insinuation.

There is another fundamental issue revealed in this episode. *Command this stone that it be made bread* (v. 3). Jesus knew, as do we, that the man who can feed the world can rule the world. Clear illustration of this is found in the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 (9:12-17). St. John recorded that when Jesus had fed the multitude, He saw that they intended to “come and take him by force

to make him a king” (John 6:15). The question was this: Would Jesus win loyalty and exercise authority by supplying physical needs? It was more than the use of Jesus' powers to feed himself, though this was, of course, a part of it. The basic question concerned the character of Jesus' ministry. In His baptism He had heard the Father calling Him to the ministry of servanthood; here He was tempted to forsake the path of suffering love and fulfill His role by merely meeting the physical needs of people. Jesus turned away from the hungry of the world to take the lonely way to Calvary's cross to meet the deep spiritual needs of men! (See John 6:26-35.)

2. The same issues underlie the episode of Satan showing Jesus all the kingdoms of the world in their glory. There, before Jesus, was the glory of the world. He had been sent into the world. *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son* (John 3:16). Part of the psalm Jesus heard at His baptism promised Him the kingdoms of the world for His inheritance (Ps. 2:8). What great and healing things He could do if He were on the throne! We still feel it: If only Jesus were King! If only He headed the government! If only He directed the policies!

Jesus did not claim that Satan did not have power, but He would not receive power from the adversary—that compromise would deny His whole meaning. He came to take away the devil's power through the power of obedient, vicarious, suffering love. Jesus is the beloved Son of God, dedicated to God's purposes in God's ways. In His act of refusal is the true worship. *Him only shalt thou serve* (4:8).

3. Suddenly, Jesus saw himself on the pinnacle of the Temple. Below, the worshippers gathered and by prayer and ritual expressed their hope for deliverance. What if He should suddenly drop like the “man from heaven” into their midst, trusting God to protect Him? He could meet their expectation, fulfill their dreams, answer their prayers, and lead them to paradise! No, He is God's Son to do God's will in God's way, to trust and not to test His Father's purposes and powers.

4. Who can plumb the depths of these temptations? Jesus came as the Bread of Life (John 6), but would not turn stones into bread. He came to save the world (1 John 4:14), yet refused to take it when it was handed to Him on a silver platter. He came to meet people's needs, trusting His Father to provide for His safety, yet He turned away from their expectations and their hopes. In each temptation He was attacked at the points of His sonship and His role of Suffering Servant. In

each He was attacked at the point of His strength. And in each, He responded by humbly placing himself under the authority of God and under the authority of the Scriptures.

The temptations He faced are precisely the ones that underlie our own. We meet the temptation to doubt our own relationship to God or turn away from filial dependence upon the Father, to deny in subtle ways Christian sonship. And like our Lord, we experience the temptation to turn away from the path of obedience and servanthood. His struggles were His own and His victories were His own. Nevertheless in His triumph we may share and learn from Him how to persevere in the wilderness of our own testings.

The Galilean Ministry

4:14—9:50

Rejection at Nazareth

Luke 4:14-30

14 And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about.

15 And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.

16 And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.

17 And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, 18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, 19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

20 And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.

21 And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.

22 And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?

23 And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country.

24 And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country.

25 But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land;

26 But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.

27 And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.

28 And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath.

29 And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.

30 But he passing through the midst of them went his way,

Jesus came from the wilderness, in the power of the Spirit, tested and ready. The opening verses (14-15) of the passage reveal the beginning of His Galilean ministry and the immediate popular response to His synagogue teaching. The temptations of Jesus, however, were by no means ended. Only the locale had changed. No doubt the experience of rejection by His own hometown was a bitter one. All through the Gospel narrative there are indications of continuing testing in which Jesus was tempted to turn away from His purposes, to grow discouraged in His mission, or to doubt the validity of His own call.

1. After a period of ministry in the villages around Galilee, Jesus went home, back to the synagogue where He first learned to read the ancient Scriptures, back to His old friends and neighbors. They had heard the rumors and reports. He was finally in their presence on familiar ground. It was customary during the synagogue service to invite a visiting rabbi to participate in the reading from the prophets with paraphrase and sermon or exhortation. When Jesus was handed the scroll, He opened it to a scripture that evidently had profound meaning for Him (Isaiah 61). The passage was a sort of mirror that revealed the depths of His understanding of himself. It constituted both His self-concept and His marching orders.

2. Jesus declared himself to be the Anointed One spoken of by the prophet who was commissioned to declare that the day of the Lord had come! The messianic era had begun. In himself and His coming He inaugurated God's gracious reign of salvation and blessing. The Saviour had come; the door of mercy was open. The poor, the captive, the needy, the sorrowing heard the good news of deliverance and release. Jesus not only declared the coming salvation; He declared His own involvement in its fulfillment. He himself was the One through whom God's grace was mediated. *This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears* (v. 21).

The gracious words He spoke, however, were choked by growing resistance. The words the Jews heard were the words of divine grace, but the Man they saw was, to them, only Joseph's son, and they were offended.

A part of the passage Jesus read, but Luke does not include, reads: *And the day of vengeance of our God* (Isa. 61:2). This One who is *set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel* (2:34) proclaimed both the salvation and the judgment of God. The word of Jesus brings grace. It also brings offense to those who reject or who see in Jesus only *Joseph's son* (v. 22). The illustrations Jesus used (vv. 25-27) brought home the point that their rejection of His message was in continuity with the long history of Israel's refusal to become the servant people of God to all the world. There were many widows in Israel, but Elijah was sent to a non-Israelite (v. 25). There were many lepers in Israel, but Elisha was sent to a non-Israelite (v. 27). Jesus' words indicated that they understood neither His mission nor their own as the covenant people. They had tied their sense of divine destiny as a nation to the idea of privilege instead of servanthood.

3. Regardless of their rejection, the day of the Lord had come in Jesus. The

messianic era had begun in Him. The doors of grace were open—light and life and hope were offered! They saw only Joseph's son, but it was God's Son who was in their midst.

What tragedy to hear in the gospel proclamation only words of men! Nonetheless, the gospel is the very *power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth* (Rom. 1:16).

They treated Jesus like a blasphemer; rushed out to stone Him in whom God's favor had been manifested.

Ministry in Capernaum

Luke 4:31-44

31 And came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath days.

32 And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power.

33 And in the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice, 34 Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God.

35 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not.

36 And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this! for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out.

37 And the fame of him went out into every place of the country round about.

38 And he arose out of the synagogue, and entered into Simon's house. And Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever; and they besought him for her.

39 And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her: and immediately she arose and ministered unto them.

40 Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them.

41 And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And he rebuking them suffered them not to speak: for they knew that he was Christ.

42 And when it was day, he departed and went into a desert place: and the people sought him, and came unto him, and stayed him, that he should not depart from them.

43 And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent.

44 And he preached in the synagogues of Galilee.

This section begins a series of episodes in which the acts of Jesus reveal the nature of His messiahship and His kingdom. The miracles and sayings of 4:31—6:11 especially emphasize the authority of Jesus. He speaks with authority and manifests sovereign power over demons, sickness, nature, leprosy, sin, and the Sabbath.

It was a period of both growing popularity and growing hostility in the Galilean ministry. A good approach to these episodes is to ask the question “Who is this Jesus?” and let His works and sayings answer the question.

1. It would be hard to imagine a more tragic contrast than the recognition of Jesus by the demon and the blindness of His own people (v. 22). In the Bible, demon possession represents man in the grip of destructive forces which are greater than he can control and from which he cannot escape.

In this account (vv. 33-37), the demon, with supernatural insight, recognized who Jesus really was, *the Holy One of God* (v. 34). Jesus exorcised the demon, delivering the victim from the tyranny of unseen powers of destruction. The people recognized His authority but not the significance of His action, which was that through the power of Jesus, the Messiah, the kingdom of evil was beginning to fall and the healing, saving reign of God was being established.

2. The man in the synagogue was seized with an evil spirit. Simon's mother-in-law was seized with *a great fever* (v. 38). Both were victims. Jesus was the Victor. With compassionate power He rebuked the fever as He had rebuked the demon. The healing was instantaneous, and she *arose and ministered unto them* (v. 39). The Messiah has authority over sickness. He brings salvation to the whole man—body, soul, and spirit.

3. How beautiful is the scene painted for us in verses 40-41! When the sun was setting (it must have been the Sabbath) the villagers brought their sick to Jesus and He healed them. He silenced the demons, for, though He was working the works of God as His Messiah, He wanted no recognition from them. They had nothing in common.

It was as though the whole range of human need was present before Jesus. In the love and power of God He reached out with total adequacy for everyone!

4. *And when it was day, he departed ...* (v. 42). The urgency of His mission left no time for Jesus to delay. He was already feeling the inward pull toward the fulfillment of His task, even though the path was hastening Him toward His death. On the other hand, part of the reason for His leaving was His desire to be alone for renewal. There was a marvellous rhythm in the life and ministry of Jesus, a sort of principle of polarity. He reached out and He withdrew. He healed multitudes, then withdrew where they could not find Him. He healed and did not heal; He ministered and did not minister. He involved himself and withdrew himself. Perhaps there is here an abiding principle of self-giving and self-renewing to which Jesus was faithful. He was able to move into a crowd without being pushed or flattered, and able to move out of a crowd without getting a martyr complex. He moved in and out with a poise and stability we often lose because we are flattered by our praise and injured by our criticism and are

concerned with our own egos more than with the Father's will. Jesus did not come simply to heal. He came to do His Father's will, and in full obedience to that will He both healed and did not heal, ministered and withdrew from ministry.

5. In Luke's narrative, this is the first time that Jesus referred to the *kingdom of God* (v. 43), which was the theme of His preaching. He had just demonstrated His power over the realm and reign of Satan manifested in demon possession and sickness. He then began to proclaim the reign, the kingly rule, the sovereignty of God. The kingdom of God is best understood as the kingly rule of God. Israelites had always believed that God was King. Jesus proclaimed that in himself that kingship was being manifested in human history in the overthrow of evil and the putting to right of the wrongs of this world. In Jesus, the saving, ruling activity of God has burst into our sin-bound existence. The dominion of Satan has been broken. Luke later reveals in his Gospel that the climactic conflict at the Cross and the triumph of the Resurrection certify the hope that ultimately the Kingdom, the kingly rule, will put down all enemies and consummate the saving process. In that day *every knee shall bow ... every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father* (Phil. 2:10-11).

LUKE 5

The Sign of the Fish

Luke 5:1-11

1 And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret.

2 And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets.

3 And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.

4 Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.

5 And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.

6 And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake.

7 And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.

8 When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

9 For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had

taken:

10 And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.

11 And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.

An almost unnoticed shift of style now takes place in the ministry of Jesus. Before this time He had been preaching in the synagogues of Galilee. Now for the first time He preached in the open air. Perhaps it means that, though He was popular with the multitudes, the religious leaders were growing hostile. Synagogues were being closed to His ministry.

The narrative here reveals the authority of Messiah over both nature and men. Jesus met the impossibilities of both barren nets and barren lives. He provided fruitfulness in the daily task of the disciples and then called them to greater service and gave new meaning to their lives.

1. The crowds, eager to hear *the word of God* (v. 1), pressed Jesus to the water's edge. He got into Simon Peter's boat and taught them from the "floating pulpit." It is clear, though Luke makes no mention of it, that this was not the first encounter of these men with Jesus. We may observe three stages of growth in the disciples' relationship to Him. John records the time of their first meeting (1:41). This occasion marked the call to discipleship (5:11; Mark 1:16-18). Somewhat later came the appointment to apostleship (6:14; Mark 3:14).

2. It is difficult not to over-symbolize the events of this paragraph, especially vv. 4-11. Jesus called Simon to *put out into the deep* (v. 4, RSV). He was asking him as well to leave behind the shallows of his present existence and prepare to involve himself in both the depths of God's redeeming work and the depths of human need.

The men had toiled all night and taken nothing, yet Simon obeyed the word of Jesus. He and his fellows surely knew something of what Jesus had been doing and saying in Galilee. They had heard His words to the multitudes that very morning. There was little faith, but there was obedience. Suddenly the nets were full of fish—more than they could handle.

3. The center of interest in the whole episode is Simon Peter's response to the miracle of the fish. He and his company saw in this event more than the supplying of their needs by supernatural power. It did not bring joy. Rather, it brought a profound moral crisis and a cry of repentance. The penetration of the divine power of Jesus made Peter acutely aware of his own unworthiness. Why didn't the miracle bring fulfillment, happiness, awe, wonder? Why did it bring this burst of contrition? Perhaps the answer lies both in the character of Peter and

the quality of his relationship with Jesus prior to this encounter. Neither of these is revealed in the narrative, but his outburst, in the words of Oscar Cullmann, “presupposes a particular intensity in Peter's consciousness of sin.” Beneath his strong and rough exterior there was in him a real sensitivity to God and a deep awareness of who he really was: a weak and human sinner. This quality in him was surely used by the Spirit in the making of this man as the early apostolic leader. Much yet needed to be done in him, but the basic ingredient was present—a sense of his own unworthiness.

4. Jesus' response to Peter thrust him into a new way of life. *From henceforth thou shalt catch men* (v. 10). The word *henceforth*, “from now on,” has special significance. It is used in Luke's Gospel in three contexts. In the Magnificat in 1:48, Mary exclaims, *From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed*. That is, the coming of the Babe in fulfillment of the saving purposes of God brought a decisive change in the human situation. There was a time division, a crisis. “From now on” life would be different because God had acted. The second context is the one in this chapter. “From now on” Peter's life will be different because of the crisis brought about by the manifestation of divine power in Christ and its claim upon Peter to respond in discipleship. The third use is in Luke 12:52. Jesus spoke of the awful pressure on His own soul to fulfill His ministry and of the fire and sword of judgment and division it would inevitably bring. He then declared, *From henceforth there shall be five in one house divided*. The coming of Christ broke into the flow of our time line. It is divided, now, into yesterday and henceforth. The time ahead is different than the time past. The new day has come. God's newness has broken in. The realities of God's age to come have invaded this present age in Jesus. His coming makes things new; it brings judgment and salvation; it calls for decision and involvement. Peter's life mission, then, is new. He is to catch men, to be a part of the action of God.

Healing of the Leper

Luke 5:12-16

12 And it came to pass, when he was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy: who seeing Jesus fell on his face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

13 And he put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him.

14 And he charged him to tell no man: but go, and shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

15 But so much the more went there a fame abroad of him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities.

16 And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed.

This is another episode in which the authority of the Messiah is manifested, not in austere, aloof superiority and strength, but in outgoing, loving compassion.

1. The regulations concerning the place of the leper in that society were clear and rigidly enforced. *“The leper who has the disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head hang loose, and he shall cover his upper lip and cry, ‘Unclean, unclean.’ He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease; he is unclean; he shall dwell alone in a habitation outside the camp”* (Lev. 13:45-46, RSV).

2. Think what it meant for that leper, and, for that matter, to all those looking on, for Jesus to come close, reach out, and touch him, saying, *I will: be thou clean* (v. 13). The word *leper* was almost as devastating as the infection. It made a man unclean and separated him from the community; it drove him outside.

Jesus crossed that wide wall of ceremonial uncleanness and social ostracism and touched this leper in love with His own purity undefiled. The purity of Jesus did not consist in maintaining an antiseptic, sterile environment. He did not have to isolate himself and remain germ-free to keep uncontaminated. His purity was inner health; it was outgoing love which sought, not protection, but opportunity. He could move freely in love because His purity was from within. He could walk healingly in an infected society because His inner health was vibrant and abundant.

Healing and Forgiveness

Luke 5:17-26

17 And it came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judaea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them.

18 And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him In, and to lay him before him.

19 And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus.

20 And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.

21 And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?

22 But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts?

23 Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee: or to say, Rise up and walk?

24 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto

the sick of the palsy.) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house.

25 And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God.

26 And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to day.

Another subtle change takes place in Luke's narrative. The episodes in previous passages have shown Jesus as the Messiah with authority. In the sections to follow, that authority is challenged. In the section 5:17—6:11 there are five “conflict stories” which reveal the growing antagonism toward Jesus on the part of official Jewry. The section closes with the scribes and Pharisees filled with fury, wondering what they can do to Jesus (6:11). The prophetic word of Simeon is in fact being proven true; this one is *set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel* (2:34).

In this paragraph are three, not just two, issues. These are the issues of healing and forgiveness, and the underlying one, Who is Jesus?

1. The whole crowd, including the men on the roof, fully expected Jesus to say something like, “Arise, take up your bed, and walk.” Instead, a new word was spoken and a deep hush gripped the crowd: *Man, thy sins are forgiven thee* (v. 20). Jesus did not teach that all sickness is the direct result of personal sin (13:1-5). However, He apparently traced this man's paralysis to his sin and saw that there would be no real healing of his body without the deeper healing of his spirit. It is not oversimplifying our human predicament to recognize that behind both the sickness of the body and the sickness of the soul is the one great sickness of humanity that the Bible calls sin. There is a fundamental connection between sickness and sin. Jesus conquers both, healing sickness and forgiving sin. His divine power to heal certifies that His authority to forgive comes from God.

2. The reaction was immediate: *Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?* (v. 21). The Pharisees had a doctrine of forgiveness. They believed that God could forgive sin on condition of true repentance. But man could not forgive sin. Jesus presumed to speak the word of forgiveness and so assumed the prerogatives of God alone. This is precisely the point of offense. Jesus did and said things that only God could do and say.

The question persists, Who is this Jesus who does what only God can do? Is He in fact God among us? To those who saw in Him only a man with pretentious claims, the answer was clear—blasphemy! To us who find in Him the very life of God the answer is clear—He is God among us. Anything less is blasphemy.

3. The Jews themselves had the saying, “No man is healed until his sins have been forgiven him.” Without argument, Jesus pronounced forgiveness—a divine act they could not see; then He healed the man—a divine act they could see. And the act of healing proved the validity of the act of forgiveness. Which was easier? Neither! Both were desperately necessary and both infinitely beyond human ability. Only the “Divine pardon incarnate” could accomplish the task.

In verse 24 we find Luke's first use of the term “Son of man.” It is found about 80 times in the Gospels, used only by Jesus, referring to himself, never by others referring to Him. It is impossible to know the precise background of the phrase as Jesus used it or what specific meaning it had for Him.

The phrase occurs many times in the Book of Ezekiel, where it means simply “man” or “human creature,” or as William Manson puts it, “creature of human form and destiny.” It appears in the vision of Daniel where one *like the Son of man* receives kingly dominion from the *Ancient of days* (Dan. 7:13).

It seems clear that Jesus used the term for himself in place of the word Messiah. He referred to himself explicitly as Messiah only once during His teaching ministry, probably because it had for the crowds national and political implications that He did not intend to fulfill (John 4:26). The term “Son of man” was more ambiguous and so more able to be interpreted by Jesus to communicate the nature of His person and work. As Jesus used the term, it meant to Him His deep involvement with humanity, His brotherhood to all men. It also meant His awareness of himself as the Messianic King to whom judgment was committed and through whom the kingdom of God would come. Therefore He used the term in connection with the healing of the paralytic and the forgiveness of sins. Son of Mary, Son of Man, Son of God, King, and Suffering Servant—both one with us and Saviour of us!

Jesus in Company with Sinners

Luke 5:27-32

27 And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him. Follow me.

28 And he left all, rose up, and followed him.

29 And Levi made him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them.

30 But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners?

31 And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician: but they that are sick.

32 I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

It is no accident that these two narratives are placed side by side: the forgiving of the paralytic and the calling of Levi (Matthew). The Messiah both forgives sin and welcomes the sinner. Levi was a tax collector, one of those hated Jews who collected from their own countrymen for the Roman Government and often made it all the worse by adding to their own wealth through extortion.

1. At first reading, the brief episode seems like an anticlimax to the list of miraculous works of Jesus beginning at 4:33. He cast out the unclean spirit, healed Peter's mother-in-law, brought wholeness to the people at evening time, provided the miraculous haul of fish, healed the leper and the paralytic; then follows the little two-verse paragraph about a tax collector named Levi. In reality, however, this story of Levi is probably the climax of all this activity of Jesus. It is the miracle to which all the others point and which they illustrate. The climactic fact is that Jesus came to call men and release them from the power of Satan and the grip of the old life. The strength that Jesus gives to a man to bid farewell to his old ways and walk out in newness of life as a disciple is in fact the climax and the climactic work of God!

2. For the Jew there was a deep and special significance to table fellowship, and Luke, more than the other Gospel writers, makes reference to Jesus at the table with His friends. In those days to break bread with someone was to identify with him in confidence and friendship. Here was Jesus eating with outcasts and sinners. It is obvious, if not our liking, that Jesus had a special appeal for the irreligious. He did not stay within the neat patterns. He reached out to those who were not to be bothered with. In himself and His ministry He created a new fellowship of the found and the forgiven.

Jesus can no more separate himself from the disreputables than a doctor can separate himself from the sick. In this fellowship with the *sick* (v. 31) and the *sinners* (v. 32), Jesus never lost His own purity nor eased His demand for repentance; but sinners in all times have found that His love is genuine, His acceptance is boundless, and His forgiveness is real! Coming to Jesus is like coming home.

Things New and Old

Luke 5:33-39

33 And they said unto him, Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees; but thine eat and drink?

34 And he said unto them, Can ye make the children of the bride-chamber fast, while the

bridegroom is with them?

35 But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.

36 And he spake also a parable unto them; No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the old.

37 And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish.

38 But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved.

39 No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better.

In this conflict story the issue is not only the matter of fasting as a religious observance; the deeper issue concerns the presence and the absence of the Bridegroom and His meaning for our acts of worship. The law required fasting one time a year on the Day of Atonement. Phariseeism had taken up the habit of frequent fasting and sought to impose it on all good Jews. John Baptist's followers fasted, as did the Early Church after Pentecost. Fasting has always been a normal response to mourning or penitence or deep desire.

1. Jesus did not nullify fasting. It was a matter of occasion. The Pharisees were fasting as a part of a program of piety and righteousness. Perhaps John Baptist's disciples were fasting because he was in prison! However, newness came in Jesus. The Bridegroom was present. In His presence the meaning of fasting was fulfilled. How can guests fast during the wedding celebration? Days will come when the Bridegroom will be taken away; then fasting will take place. (The term "taken away" is the first intimation in Luke of the coming death and departure of Jesus. The term itself implies rejection and violent death.)

2. The two parables which follow (vv. 36-39) amplify the point that the newness the Messiah brings is not to be patched onto the old religious system. He brings, not new patches, but a new garment. The life He brings will not be poured into old molds.

There seems to be in this passage and in the following conflict stories about the Sabbath (6:1-11) a continuity-discontinuity theme. Something continues from the old, but it is new and not simply the old patched up. For example, Jesus did not destroy fasting; however, the fasting to be done by His disciples after His departure was not to be the old "righteousness-fasting," the seeking to acquire merit before God. The meaning of fasting was preserved in naturalness and simplicity. So with the Sabbath; Messiah, Lord of the Sabbath, brought newness, but did not obliterate the Sabbath. The Christian keeps the Lord's day, not the old Sabbath. Nevertheless, the real meaning of *sabbath* is maintained. Perhaps this is the crux of the whole issue. The old is not destroyed; it is superseded, not by a

“Band-Aid” approach, but by radical renewal. It is, however, precisely in this renewal that the real meanings of our religious observances are preserved. The continuity is guaranteed in the discontinuity.

3. Verse 39 is realistic and prophetic. The radical newness makes radical demands. The law of inertia has great power. They were not ready for renewal. “*The old is better,*” they said (v. 39).

LUKE 6

Lord of the Sabbath

Luke 6:1-11

1 And it came to pass on the second sabbath after the first, that he went through the corn fields; and his disciples plucked the ears of corn, and did eat, rubbing them in their hands.

2 And certain of the Pharisees said unto them, Why do ye that which is not lawful to do on the sabbath days?

3 And Jesus answering them said, Have ye not read so much as this, what David did, when himself was an hungered, and they which were with him;

4 How he went into the house of God, and did take and eat the shew-bread, and gave also to them that were with him; which it is not lawful to eat but for the priests alone?

5 And he said unto them, That the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

6 And it came to pass also on another sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue and taught: and there was a man whose right hand was withered.

7 And the scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath day; that they might find an accusation against him.

8 But he knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth.

9 Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it?

10 And looking round about upon them all, he said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so; and his hand was restored whole as the other.

11 And they were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus.

These two episodes of Jesus and the Sabbath bring to a close the section of conflict stories. The growing popularity of Jesus was matched with growing hostility on the part of the Jewish orthodoxy. The new life and power of Jesus was breaking up the old patterns and ways of Judaism and it met with strong antagonism. The Messiah persevered and endured against opposition in the fulfillment of His God-given task.

1. In the tradition of the rabbis, gathering grain was forbidden on the Sabbath, except when life was in danger. It was on this basis that David took the holy

bread from the house of God to feed himself and his hungry men and was not counted guilty (1 Sam. 21:1-6). Jesus did not gather grain merely to make occasion for offense. He and His men were hunger-driven, and as Lord of the Sabbath, the Son of Man brought to bear the real purpose of the Sabbath—to save life. Another factor was present. The law could be broken when the issue was life or death. Jesus conceived His mission as an urgent one; indeed, a matter of life or death. Mission must be placed before tradition.

2. In the second incident Jesus took the initiative before the scribes and Pharisees could spring their trap. For Him, refusal to do good was to do evil. Refusal to save life was equal to destruction of it.

How radical was His ethic! Men cannot hide behind tradition and refuse to save life or act redemptively. Holy words or holy customs must not keep us from service to men. The old saying surely holds true here: “The better the day, the better the deed.” But there is no middle ground, no do-nothing neutrality.

Perhaps this radical, urgent, positive attitude of Jesus was the force behind much of His opposition. His presence demands response, decision, and obedience. Like Levi, we are called to get up and follow the Messiah. We are called to take up the cross and become obedient disciples. To be neutral is to refuse.

This section of Luke (4:31—6:11) was begun with the suggestion to ask the question, Who is Jesus? and let the doings and sayings answer the question. Who then is this Jesus? He is God's Messiah, who comes into the human scene with power over demons and sickness and nature and men and leprosy. He calls men, forgives sin, shares with sinners, declares His lordship, and challenges men to decision concerning himself and His task. It appears that the entire passage is intended as a commentary on the words He read in the synagogue at Nazareth (4:18-19). He declared that the word of Isaiah (61:1-2) was true about himself—and then proceeded to fulfill it in His strong ministry of compassion and healing.

The Choosing of the Twelve

Luke 6:12-16

12 And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

13 And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles;

14 Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, 15 Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called Zelotes.

16 And Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor.

Luke often made mention of the prayer life of Jesus. He prayed at His baptism (3:21), as He moved out into the synagogues of Palestine (4:44), after healing the multitudes of their infirmities (5:16), and here before the choosing of the Twelve.

1. The number 12 is significant. The “conflict stories” of 5:17—6:11 imply that Jesus had separated himself from the synagogue and old Judaism and had moved out among the crowds that had gathered from all Palestine. He now began to gather the new community of faith. It was a decisive step in His ministry. In choosing the Twelve, He formed the basis of the new Israel which was to fulfill the mission the old Israel failed to fulfill. These men, human as they were and full of weakness, still represented the new covenant people, the inheritors of the promises, and the bearers of the promises to the world!

2. The call of the Messiah creates a fellowship. These men, human, weak, sinful, different, are summoned to a new sharing of life. The Kingdom the Messiah proclaims is both individual and social. The men are called one by one. Yet they are called to a fellowship, and without the fellowship they are nothing. God's life in our world brings people together and it is as a community, a fellowship, that we have our influence as the channels of God's redemptive action. In the Old Testament, God called a people to whom He spoke and through whom He spoke. In Christ the new people of God are called to share His life with one another in the living fellowship of the Church.

3. The Twelve formed an inner group within the larger company of disciples. Jesus chose ordinary men. Simon was called “Rock” as a surname. Andrew has not been mentioned by Luke before this time. John indicates that he introduced Peter to Jesus (John 1:42). James and John were with Peter in the fishing business. Matthew was Levi, the tax collector. Thomas was one of twins. Another was Simon the Zealot, who probably got his description from his fiery nationalism. Judas was the only one of the group from southern Palestine. His name “Iscaiot” may mean “man of Kerioth,” a town in Transjordan or Judea.

With one or two exceptions we read little more of them as individuals. Their importance was not what they were in themselves, but what they were in fellowship with Jesus and what they became as a community of the Holy Spirit. They were apostles, “sent ones” to proclaim the saving Word.

The Inaugural Sermon to the New Israel

Luke 6:17-19

17 And he came down with them, and stood in the plain, and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judaea and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases;
18 And they that were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed.
19 And the whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all.

The context of Luke's short version of the Sermon on the Mount is very significant. Jesus was rejected by old Israel. He chose the Twelve as the representatives of the new Israel of faith—Israel by grace. The sermon was preached to them. The words immediately preceding the sermon further reveal the “grace” character of the new Israel's life. Luke's words (vv. 17-19) picture people coming to Jesus from all over Palestine with deep needs and being healed by Him. It is in the context of their calling by Christ and in the healing, delivering power of Christ that the sermon to the disciples is to be interpreted. It is a sermon for disciples, not for the crowds. It was given in the context of God's saving presence in Jesus to heal and deliver them. It then presupposed the grace of God in the lives of the disciples and was not intended as a law or standard laid on them to achieve in their own strength. It is rather a declaration of the character of the Kingdom the Messiah has inaugurated and a summary delineation of the quality of life manifested by those who by faith share the new powers of the Kingdom.

A. M. Hunter in his book, *The Work and Words of Jesus*, sums it up this way: “The way of life described in the sermon is the way for those men who acknowledge one supreme loyalty and in whose heart one supreme passion burns—loyalty to Jesus the Messiah and the passion for the Kingdom of God. ... it is design for life in the Kingdom of God.”

The Beatitudes

Luke 6:20-26

20 And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.
21 Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh.
22 Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake.
23 Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.
24 But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation.
25 Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep.
26 Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false

prophets.

The Beatitudes set the tone for the rest of the sermon. Jesus spoke to disciples, who knew both something about the power of the kingdom of God and something about the realities of life as disciples in the sinful world. Behind all that Jesus said is the tension between these two. The Kingdom has broken into the world and will ultimately triumph over evil. The Kingdom is present now in Jesus, but it will be consummated only in the future in the triumphant return of Christ, when God's sovereignty will be vindicated. The present time, then, partakes of both the sinful realities of this age and the hope of eternal glory in the age to come. The sermon speaks to disciples of Jesus who live in the tension between these two.

1. Jesus blessed the poor, the hungry, the sorrowing and despised disciples. In Luke's account there is no defining spiritual qualification given to their condition, as there is in Matthew 5 (cf. 5:3, *poor in spirit*; 5:6, *hunger and thirst after righteousness*). This reflects both the deep concern of Jesus and the special interest of Luke in the lower classes and outcasts of society. Jesus saw the real-life situation of His followers. He understood their poverty and hunger and rejection. Yet He called them *blessed* because the grace of God had entered the scene in such a way that these were transformed. They were now ringed with hope. Assurance is given that the last word is never hunger or poverty or sorrow or hate. Love has conquered and the people are blessed!

2. There is more involved in these Beatitudes than concern for poverty. A theological significance underlies them. The "poor" represent the pious, the faithful in Israel who wait for the coming of the Lord; they endure injustice and loss and have set their hopes on God and have been faithful to Him. The hungry and sorrowful are those who hunger for God, who long for divine justice to prevail, who weep for the tragedy of sin. They are *blessed* because God's sovereignty is breaking the power of evil, and the faith and loyalty of the disciples will be vindicated.

3. All through the Beatitudes and the words which follow there is a contrast theme. In a time contrast, Jesus put the present situation of the disciples over against their future glory. The present is not the final word. Our hope is never locked into the present. We live in hope. Our hope is not a dream or illusion, because already the power of God has come decisively in Jesus. But we live now in victory that, however real, is partial. What God has done in Jesus is the ground of our hope for the future consummation when what is partial will be

made whole. In the meantime *we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God* (Rom. 5:2, RSV; cf. also Rom. 8:18-39).

In a character contrast, Jesus reveals that the presence of the Kingdom makes its demands and separates men. If we endure rejection now for the sake of the Messiah, it means we share the realities of the Kingdom. On the other hand, if we are at home in this present world and share the value system of this world, we will come under the judgment of God. For the true disciple, the Kingdom means blessedness. For those who profess but do not really belong, the Kingdom means condemnation. These Beatitudes come to us with radical testing power. They are more than beautiful phrases to lift our spirits; they rather stand as imperatives for followers of Jesus and reveal their relationship to the Kingdom.

The Law of Love

Luke 6:27-36

27 But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, 28 Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, 29 And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also.

30 Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.

31 And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.

32 For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them.

33 And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same.

34 And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again.

35 But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.

36 Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

The life of the Kingdom as expressed in the Beatitudes is characterized by a total reversal of the values of this world. In this paragraph, that life is characterized by love, which is described by William Manson as “the most active and unlimited benevolence.” God's life is expressed in His “reign” or kingdom through Jesus Christ. We are to express that life, as Manson says, “by making God's own will and spirit the regulative principle of conduct.” It is clear that “God's own will and spirit” in our conduct mean practiced love in daily behavior. The love described in this section is certainly not emotional sentimentalism. It is an active, unlimited spirit of goodwill in the face of opposition and wrong. It is caring for others and seeking their good. Von Hugel's

last words were, “Christianity taught us to care. Caring is the greatest thing. Caring matters most.”

Jesus' teaching on love is really a description of himself and His own attitude toward opposition and spite. He is the embodiment of the ideal here expressed.

1. Jesus seemed to have two pictures in mind in vv. 27-31: physical violence and robbery. The disciples lived in an occupied land and were subject to frequent provocations. Their rights were always threatened and the atmosphere of hate and distrust pervaded the whole society.

The word of Jesus is radical. It meant, indeed, a total reversal of the world's values! The specific references are limited and extreme; therefore the passage does not teach a full ethic for all personal relationships. What it does teach is a key principle of nonviolence in personal encounters, non-retaliation in the face of personal wrongs. It does not teach a give-away, be-walked-on philosophy of life. It does teach us to *overcome evil with good* (Rom. 12:21).

Jesus taught His disciples not merely to submit to acts of aggression but to soften their sting and conquer their tyranny by going beyond their demands. This is His way of overcoming. If evil towards us begets evil in us, it is multiplied. His love in us enabling us to absorb the evil and return good neutralizes and dispels its power. So it is not only a principle of non-retaliation; it is a principle of positive benevolence and care that Jesus teaches. The golden rule is not “Don't do to others what you don't want done to you.” That is the old law. Jesus teaches us rather: “*As you wish that men would do to you, do so to them*” (v. 31, RSV).

2. In the next paragraph, vv. 32-36, the standard is lifted even higher. We are not to measure ourselves and our behavior by comparisons with others. The Kingdom ethic is not, “Be better.” It is, “Be Godlike!” The standard of loving behavior is God's expression of mercy to all men, and supremely His merciful gift of himself to us is Jesus, the One who spoke to us through this sermon.

3. Two conclusions are abundantly clear. First, the words of Jesus are radical. They cannot be passed over lightly with a nod and a knowing smile that says, “Yes, I understand.” We do *not* understand! These words cut right through our complacencies and send us to our knees in repentance and confession. Second, the words of Jesus are impossible! We cannot pour the water of our rationalizations and explanations and dilute them thin enough to handle them in our own strength! When we take the words seriously we know they put before us an impossible lifestyle we cannot achieve. We are driven to dependence upon

God's grace for fulfillment. The Kingdom demands are fulfilled in Kingdom grace!

Judgment

Luke 6:37-42

37 Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:

38 Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

39 And he spake a parable unto them. Can the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch?

40 The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.

41 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

42 Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye.

Here is a warning against trying to take God's prerogative of judgment into our own hands. The entire sermon of Jesus is in some ways a sermon of judgment. Our worldly values are judged; our tenacious hold on our own rights is judged; our selfishness and favorable comparisons are judged; and our spirit of judgment is judged! Yet we are not to judge. Here is a very practical application of the principle of love expressed in the previous paragraph. Since we all stand under judgment, we cannot expect mercy if we are not ready to give it.

1. We must of course be discerning. We cannot condone evil or refuse to make moral judgments. One old commentator observed: "We are to call dogs dogs and swine swine." It is faultfinding in personal relationships, nit picking, imputing bad motives, that Jesus refers to.

We are rather to look into our own hearts. There is enough there to keep us humbly growing and gentle with our brother. There is expressed here a kind of spiritual law of reciprocity. What we give out has a way of coming back to us. "Chickens come home to roost." It is not a work-righteousness but a description of the way things operate in God's world: Affirm and be affirmed, forgive and be forgiven, give and be given, judge and be judged!

2. The parable of the *speck* and the *log* (v. 41, RSV) is the kind of humorous hyperbole Jesus sometimes used to hammer home a point (e.g., Matt. 23:24, *strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel*). The very impossibility of the illustration

reveals how very possible it is for us to act in just such a manner.

G. B. Caird in his commentary on Luke summarizes Jesus' words this way, "Pseudo-religion, which Jesus calls hypocrisy, is forever trying to make other people better; and the cure for it is a mirror."

On Character and Obedience

Luke 6:43-49

43 For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.
44 For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes.

45 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.

46 And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?

47 Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like:

48 He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock.

49 But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.

These words of Jesus must be kept in the context of the sermon to disciples who share the life of the Kingdom and who will bear the leadership role after His departure. They are not just moral proverbs.

1. His disciples needed to be discerning about coming false teachers who would deceive them and destroy the young Church in days ahead. In Matthew the parallel passage is prefaced by the words: *Beware of false prophets* (7:15). Looks and outward style can easily mislead. What is important is the heart, the character, the inner person.

His disciples also needed to be discerning about the tendency toward falseness within themselves. Their real influence was not from their gifts or their personalities but from their inner character. *Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life* (Prov. 4:23). As William Baird puts it, "Disciples are men who do not judge, whose vision is clear, whose heart is right."

2. A key word in the life of the Kingdom is obedience. Jesus plainly said that discipleship means bowing before His lordship. But it is not enough to say, "Lord, Lord." The words of Jesus are to be taken seriously and obeyed. There is no substitute. How often we see Christians act as though Jesus had not spoken the words of the sermon or did not really mean them! The profound truth here is

really simple: To hear Christ's words and do them is how we build a life that will endure when the storms come. To hear and not obey means that, when the storms and floods come, our house will be destroyed. Jesus declared His sovereignty here. He is Lord. His words convey His life and power. If we truly receive Him as Lord, we are bound to obey—and bound to endure.

LUKE 7

Healer and Giver of Life

Luke 7:1-17

- 1 Now when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum.
- 2 And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die.
- 3 And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant.
- 4 And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this:
- 5 For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue.
- 6 Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof:
- 7 Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed.
- 8 For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.
- 9 When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.
- 10 And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick.
- 11 And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people.
- 12 Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her.
- 13 And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.
- 14 And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.
- 15 And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother.
- 16 And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people.
- 17 And this rumour of him went forth throughout all Judaea, and throughout all the region round about.

At the completion of the sermon to the disciples, the Messiah-King moved again into the flow of society. The two healing narratives of this section are part of the progressive self-revelation of Jesus as Healer and Giver of life. They also prepare for the encounter of Jesus with the disciples of John Baptist (vv. 18-35).

Very possibly, Luke's account of the healing of the servant of the Gentile centurion (vv. 1-10) anticipates the turning of the Gentiles to Christ, a theme of the Book of Acts. The healing of the widow's son is one of three resuscitations in the Gospels. Jairus' daughter (8:49-56) and Lazarus (John 11:43-44) are the other two.

1. The centurion whose servant was healed manifested two qualities which Jesus found lacking in Israel, humility and faith. The elders of the Jews said, "*He is worthy ... he loves our nation ... he built us our synagogue*" (vv. 4-5, RSV). When Jesus and His group came near the home, the centurion sent ahead this word: *I am not worthy* (v. 6). The crux of the narrative seems to be the matter of authority. The Roman was a man under authority and he also had authority. He knew what it meant to obey and to be obeyed. He manifested absolute confidence in the authority of Jesus and the power of His commands. He truly accepted the authority of Jesus. And Jesus called it faith! Full trust in the authority of Jesus, obedience to the word of Jesus—these equal faith. This is an instance where healing took place at a distance by the authority of the word of Jesus. His word was as good as His presence. Across the distance the mighty power of God went with the word of Jesus. No signs here, no display, not even the personal presence. Only full confidence in the authority of the absent Christ. For all their preoccupation with signs the Jews missed the reality of faith. Not in all Israel had Jesus found faith like this. No doubt this miracle had special meaning for later Gentile Christians in the Church who had not seen Jesus in person, yet had shared by faith His healing power in their lives.

2. Luke refers to Jesus as *the Lord* (v. 13) in the story of the raising of the widow's son. Jesus is the Lord of life with power over death. The dominant emotion is compassion for the widow: *the only son of his mother, and she was a widow* (v. 12). Nothing was said of faith. His love reached out to restore life to the son and joy to his mother.

The response of the crowds ("*A great prophet has arisen among us!*" v. 16, RSV) indicated, perhaps, their memory of the stories of Elijah and the restoration to life of the widow's son at Zarephath (1 Kings 17:17-24), and the raising of the son of the Shunammite woman by Elisha (2 Kings 4:32-37). The crowd saw in Jesus *a great prophet*. There was still misunderstanding about the messiahship, as John Baptist's later question reveals (vv. 18-20). However, there was awareness on their part that in the acts of Jesus God was "visiting" His people. More than the doings of a wonder-worker, they saw in Jesus a divine

visitation.

The miracle of the raising of the dead is probably the most difficult for modern man to accept. There is no way to explain it away except by tampering with the records or simply repudiating the historical accuracy of the writers. It is finally a question of who Jesus is, and a question of our trustful commitment to Him. The purpose of Luke's Gospel is to show Jesus as the sovereign Messiah-King, and to call us to faith in Him, the Healer and Giver of life with power over death.

Jesus and John Baptist

Luke 7:18-35

18 And the disciples of John shewed him of all these things.

19 And John calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?

20 When the men were come unto him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?

21 And in that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight.

22 Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached.

23 And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

24 And when the messengers of John were departed, he began to speak unto the people concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind?

25 But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously apparelled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts.

26 But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet.

27 This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

28 For I say unto you. Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.

29 And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John.

30 But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.

31 And the Lord said. Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation? and to what are they like?

32 They are like unto children sitting in the marketplace, and calling one to another, and saying. We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept.

33 For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, Me hath a devil.

34 The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say. Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!

35 But wisdom is justified of all her children.

It is difficult to know the precise attitude of John Baptist toward Jesus at this

time. Some scholars say that John's faith was growing when he sent his disciples to Jesus. Most argue that it was probably a time of doubt and questioning for him.

The passage breaks into three sections: John's question about Jesus (vv. 18-23), Jesus' declaration about John (vv. 24-30), and Jesus' words about the people (vv. 31-35). Jesus calls John to renewed faith, interprets John and his ministry to the crowds, and chides them for their childish, petulant unbelief.

1. John was in prison when he heard of the wonderful works of Jesus. He had preached that the Messiah would come with the winnowing fork of judgment (Matt. 3:12) and the axe of destruction (Luke 3:9), who would fan the mighty flames of the Holy Spirit. It turned out that Jesus cared and cured, lifted and healed. John probably had considerable difficulty reconciling the two. So he sent disciples to ask the question, *Art thou he that should come?* (v. 19).

In the very hour of their coming Jesus *cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight* (v. 21). Then He responded to John's messengers. The listing of miracles—sight to the blind, strength to the lame, cleansing of lepers, hearing for the deaf, life to the dead, and the gospel preached to the poor—was not simply a description of what Jesus was doing. It was rather an interpretation of himself in terms of the prophecies of Isaiah 29; 35; and 61. These Old Testament words that Jesus used to answer John's question were prophecies of the age of Messiah! Jesus was really saying to John: “What I am doing is Messiah's work!” He was not simply listing off His activities; He was saying in a way John could not misunderstand, “I am the Messiah, doing Messiah's work.”

John himself was challenged by Jesus' concluding statement: *Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me* (v. 23). John had truly proclaimed that Messiah would come with judgment! He failed to see the judgment implicit in the preaching and healing of Jesus. He did not discern the fact that the ministry of Jesus exposed men's hearts, revealed their inner motives, called them into the presence of God, and demanded decision! John himself was called to decision by Jesus' ministry. All men are confronted and judged and exposed and called to decision and discipleship by Jesus. Blessed are those who respond in obedient faith and who do not take offense.

2. How did Jesus evaluate John? Not a weakling or softling in a king's palace! Jesus said John was a prophet, one of the company of Moses and Samuel and Elijah and Amos and Hosea and Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel! He belonged

to that great line of spokesmen to whom and through whom the *word of God came* (3:2). But he was *more than a prophet* (v. 26). He was the last in the line and greatest of all of the prophets. In fact he was the one who opened the door for the entrance of Jesus the Messiah into our human situation.

Yet Jesus said: *Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he* (v. 28). John belongs, really, to the old covenant, the old dispensation. The greatest of the blessings of the old cannot compare with the least of the new! Jesus is clearly showing by this extreme contrast the magnificence and grandeur of the grace that is brought to us who share in His kingdom. The blessings of life in Christ far surpass the greatest days that Old Testament prophets ever knew. His reality far exceeds any anticipation! In Jesus is more than promise. There is fulfillment.

3. Reflected in the next paragraph (vv. 31-35) is a subtle change in the attitude of Jesus toward the crowds. To this point in His ministry there has been growing popularity on the part of the crowds and growing hostility on the part of the leaders of the Jews. Yet Jesus perceived a disconcerting shallowness and petulance on their part toward His ministry as well as that of John. They were like children in the streets. One group wanted to play funeral, but the other group would not mourn. One group wanted to play wedding, but the other group would not dance. John the Baptist was austere; they finally rejected him. Jesus was sociable; they finally rejected Him.

No one could please them! Nevertheless, God was both judgingly and savingly at work in their midst in John the forerunner and Jesus the Messiah. There were those, however, who responded and were themselves caught up in the saving purposes of God. In them God's wisdom was vindicated.

Pharisee and Sinner

Luke 7:36-50

36 And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat.

37 And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, 38 And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.

39 Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner.

40 And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith,

Master, say on.

41 There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty.

42 And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?

43 Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.

44 And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.

45 Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet.

46 My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.

47 Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.

48 And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.

49 And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also?

50 And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.

In some ways this dramatic, emotional episode is a specific illustration of the situation Jesus described in the previous paragraph. Simon was one of those who would have accused John Baptist of having a *devil* (v. 33), and here inwardly accused Jesus of being *a friend of publicans and sinners* (v. 34). As for himself, Simon was neither friend of the devil nor friend of sinners nor friend of God! He was alone, caught in the trap of his judgmental spirit. The narrative is a study in contrasts, shifting back and forth between Simon and the woman, each of whom is understood only in relation to the central Figure, who is Jesus. Both his lack of courteous welcome and his inward reasonings reveal that Simon did not invite Jesus to his home with pure motives. Yet Jesus came—because He loved Simon with the same kind of forgiving love He showed toward the woman who was a sinner.

1. Dinner parties like this one were usually held in a large, open room with wandering musicians, jugglers, and acrobats entertaining the guests. The curious and the poor gathered in the open arches. The woman had easy access to Jesus, who was not sitting up to the table but reclining on a couch at the table's edge with His legs extended outward.

There is every indication that the woman had met or heard Jesus before. In a generally parallel section Matthew records the words of Jesus, *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest* (11:28). It could be that these words reached her at the edge of the crowd, meeting her hopelessness and guilt with forgiveness and grace and strength. She already knew she was

forgiven and she came prepared to offer Jesus her gratitude. She was evidently not prepared for the wave of emotion that broke over her. In His presence she began to weep. She knelt quickly and loosed her long hair and wiped His feet, smothered them with kisses, and anointed them with rich perfume. It was an impulsive and extravagantly emotional scene. There is nothing in Western culture to compare with it. Even Simon felt it was overdone and despised her for it. No more, perhaps, than she despised him and all the self-righteous moralism he stood for.

2. What a contrast between Simon and the woman! The highest and the lowest culture, the suburbs and the slums, the synagogue and brothel brought together in the house by the magnetism of Jesus; and it was all a scandal to Simon. There was anger in his reasoning, *This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner* (v. 39). In his mind purity equalled exclusiveness, holiness was the same as separateness, cleanness meant superior aloofness. He could not see that holiness could mean love and that purity could mean caring and love.

3. Jesus responded to Simon's thoughts with the question-parable of the two debtors. One owed \$10.00 and the other \$100. They both had nothing. They both were utterly forgiven. Jesus was saying, "Simon, are you ready to say you are not a sinner at all?" *Oh, no, but I'm certainly not a great sinner like this woman!* probably was Simon's thought.

At once Jesus did away with the idea of big sins and little sins, of respectable sinners and bad sinners: *They [both] had nothing to pay* (v. 42). Simon had drawn a great line between himself and the woman, and compared to her he was practically a saint. Jesus erased the line. "Simon, you think you see this woman? No, you don't see her at all! You may look on her to lust, or look at her to despise, but you don't really see her, and you don't see yourself either."

With a fine sense of irony Jesus drove the point home with a series of behavior contrasts between the self-righteous Pharisee and the penitent sinner:

The customary bath for guests' feet had been neglected,
Yet the woman had showered His feet with tears.
The courteous kiss of welcome had been ignored,
Yet she ceased not to kiss His feet.
The gracious act of anointing had been overlooked,
Yet the "sinner" had anointed His feet with perfume.

4. The trouble with Simon was that he had no sense of forgiveness and so no sense of love. He hadn't received forgiveness and didn't know how to give forgiveness. He had never seen himself as a bankrupt debtor and couldn't

understand poverty. John Bunyan wrote: “Alas, Christ gets but little thanks for the saving of little sinners. He gets not water for his feet by the saving of such sinners. There is an abundance of dry-eyed Christians in the world, an abundance of dry-eyed duties, too; duties that were never wetted with the tears of contrition and repentance nor ever sweetened with the great sinner's box of ointment.” The episode does not teach that one must be a great sinner to have great forgiveness and express great love. It does teach that love has its roots in forgiveness. The sense of having been utterly forgiven with nothing to pay is the fountain-head of our loving relationships with others. *We love, because he first loved us* (1 John 4:19, RSV).

5. Jesus' final words to the woman are only an assurance and confirmation of a pardon she already possessed. He said to her, literally: *Go into peace* (v. 50). She had begun a cycle that would never end. She had begun expressing her gratitude for forgiveness by self-giving care. The moment of tender, uninhibited emotion was now to be lengthened into a lifetime of caring. Through her now could flow out the love and forgiveness which she herself had received from the Saviour.

LUKE 8

A Preaching Tour

Luke 8:1-3

- 1 And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him,
- 2 And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils,
- 3 And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance.

Luke's Gospel reveals Jesus as a Man on the move. He began the Galilean ministry preaching in the synagogues; after opposition closed their doors to Him, He moved out into the open and traveled with the disciples through the cities and villages. On the tour here described, Jesus and the Twelve were accompanied by several women who provided for the needs of the group from their private funds. Later, Jesus sent the Twelve out on a mission that extended His ministry beyond where He himself could go.

1. The theme of His preaching was the kingdom of God. The teachings and miracles of chapter 8 clarify the message that the Kingdom brings deliverance

from death and demonic powers and restores men and nature to God's intended order. It also makes its demands for faith and obedience. Though a note of rejection is present, the word bears its fruit a *hundredfold* (v. 8).

2. The women who provided for the travelers had one thing in common: they had been healed by Jesus. Luke pictures for us the nucleus of the new community of faith, growing and ministering: first the Twelve; then this larger circle from differing classes and backgrounds, all drawn together into a servant fellowship by the power of Jesus. The women Luke names were probably active in the Palestinian church in later years where Luke was gathering material for his Gospel.

Sowing the Seed of the Kingdom

Luke 8:4-18

4 And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable:

5 A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it.

6 And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture.

7 And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it.

8 And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

9 And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be?

10 And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.

11 Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.

12 Those by the wayside are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.

13 They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.

14 And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.

15 But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.

16 No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light.

17 For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither any thing hid, that shall not be known and come abroad.

18 Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have.

Jesus' parable of the seed and the soil is probably intended to explain, in part, the results of the preaching tour. Not all men hear and receive the Word with joy. The devil, men's shallowness, the cares and riches of this life hinder them in

their response to the gospel. Yet the seed of the Word has life that will produce results.

1. Some men's hearts and minds are hard-packed by the traffic of their thoughts and actions. They are insensitive, unresponsive, and the saving truth is soon gone. Others hear and respond, but do not endure when temptation and pressure come, and the new life growing in them withers and dies. Still others hear and receive the Word of God, but it is *choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life* (v. 14, RSV). No fruit comes to maturity because life is too crowded. Yet there are others *who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bring forth fruit with patience* (v. 15, RSV).

The parable came both as a comfort to the disciples who were disappointed in the results of their ministry and as a warning to those who heard the message and responded carelessly.

2. Why did Jesus speak in parables? In response to the disciples' request for interpretation Jesus answered that the open secrets of the Kingdom were indeed open to them because their hearts and minds were open to Him. But for those who will not respond, who will not see and believe, the mystery of the Kingdom remains a mystery. It was because men would not respond to the open declaration of the Kingdom that Jesus spoke in parables. He did not use them to cover up the truth. The problem was that unbelieving hearts would not see the truth.

The parables of Jesus, then, had the purpose of making the great truths of the Kingdom simple, so that men could get hold of them. They also had the purpose of distinguishing the hearer who was ready to respond from the dull listener who heard only an interesting story. Yet the parable put the truth in such a way that the dull bearer would not forget it, and perhaps it would grow on him at a later time. Always the parable had the purpose of calling the hearer to decision about the story which was at the same time a decision about Jesus. That is the genius of His use of the parable—response to the parable was response to himself.

3. The saying about the lighted candle is a variation on the same theme. The gospel of the Kingdom is the light of God that illuminates men. It is not destined to be obscured, but to be spread and shed to all men. The disciples are not to withhold the saving, shining Word but share it in confidence of ultimate victory. The Jewish nation had received light but hid it within themselves and so lost it. The light must be shared.

Jesus' True Family

Luke 8:19-21

19 Then came to him his mother and his brethren, and could not come at him for the press.

20 And it was told him by certain which said, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee.

21 And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it.

John indicates that Jesus' own brothers did not believe in Him before the Resurrection (John 7:5). In the parallel section of Mark's Gospel the family and friends of Jesus came looking for Him, thinking He was *beside himself* (3:21, 31-35). They wanted to take Him home. In this episode Jesus made for himself that renunciation which He requires of all His followers (9:57-62; 14:26-27). For the sake of the Kingdom, Jesus made choice of another family, the great family of those who do the will of God.

1. It is not hard to understand the concern of Jesus' close friends and family. He had left the carpenter shop, had accumulated a questionable assortment of friends, and had become the center of a growing movement on a collision course with Jewish orthodoxy. The family came with good intentions to save Him from himself.

2. The dedication of himself to the whole family of God meant that His own kin must take second place. Jesus did not shut out His family; He rather opened wide His arms to bring all men, including His family, into the intimacy and fellowship of the family of God. When He emphasized doing the will of God, He put all family relationships on a new level. The ties of our common obedience to God are stronger and superior to the ties of blood. His call was clear. His obedience was total, and He paid the price He had to pay in terms of misunderstanding. It is obedience that binds men close to the heart of Jesus. Our first call is to share in His family and do His Father's will.

The Mighty Power of Jesus

Luke 8:22-56

22 Now it came to pass on a certain day, that he went into a ship with his disciples: and he said unto them, Let us go over unto the other side of the lake. And they launched forth.

23 But as they sailed he fell asleep: and there came down a storm of wind on the lake; and they were filled with water, and were in jeopardy.

24 And they came to him, and awoke him, saying, Master, master, we perish. Then he arose, and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water: and they ceased, and there was a calm.

25 And he said unto them, Where is your faith? And they being afraid wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him.

26 And they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is over against Galilee.

27 And when he went forth to land, there met him out of the city a certain man, which had devils long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs.

28 When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech thee, torment me not.

29 (For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.)

30 And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him.

31 And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep.

32 And there was there an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they besought him that he would suffer them to enter into them. And he suffered them.

33 Then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked.

34 When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went and told it in the city and in the country.

35 Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.

36 They also which saw it told them by what means he that was possessed of the devils was healed.

37 Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought him to depart from them; for they were taken with great fear: and he went up into the ship, and returned back again.

38 Now the man out of whom the devils were departed besought him that he might be with him: but Jesus sent him away, saying, 39 Return to thine own house, and shew how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him.

40 And it came to pass, that, when Jesus was returned, the people gladly received him: for they were all waiting for him.

41 And, behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue: and he fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought him that he would come into his house:

42 For he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying. But as he went the people thronged him.

43 And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, 44 Came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her Issue of blood stanchd.

45 And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou. Who touched me?

46 And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me.

47 And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately.

48 And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.

49 While he yet spake, there cometh one from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master.

50 But when Jesus heard it, he answered him, saying, Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole.

51 And when he came into the house, he suffered no man to go in, save Peter, and James, and John,

and the father and the mother of the maiden.

52 And all wept, and bewailed her: but he said, Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth.

53 And they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead.

54 And he put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise.

55 And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway: and he commanded to give her meat.

56 And her parents were astonished: but he charged them that they should tell no man what was done.

This chapter of Luke opens with a preaching tour in which Jesus proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God. The power of the Kingdom was shown in the authoritative word of God spoken by the Messiah. Jesus spoke to winds and waves; He spoke to demons, to the sick, and the dead—and they obeyed! The mighty works Jesus did are in fact the very works of God. He was no mere wonder-worker. He did not do astounding acts to astonish the people or to overwhelm them into acceptance by the sheer weight of His might. Rather, His works reveal the saving, healing power of God to all who truly believe.

1. In the first episode Jesus is revealed as Master of wind and wave (vv. 22-25). The contrast here is magnificent. Coming down through the tunnelliike valleys that separate the hills around Lake Galilee came a wind of hurricane force. The waves were literally beating into the little ship. The men were desperately afraid. *Master, master, we perish* (v. 24). This is one of the few recorded incidents when Jesus deliberately controlled the forces of nature. His mighty act can be best understood by relating it to the ancient Jewish view of the waters. In the Old Testament the sea is always represented as the realm of the dangerous and the mysterious. It held both a strange fascination and a fear for the Hebrew. In Isa. 57:20, the restless sea represents the sinful, troubled world: *The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt*. The great power of God is shown in that He is the Lord of the wind and the waves (Ps. 89:9; 107:23-30). No wonder the disciples were awestruck! *What manner of man* indeed! (v. 25)—a Man in whom was manifested the very power of God, who in loving care for His disciples brought to bear upon their desperate situation the sovereign power of God! Ps. 65:7 speaks of a God *which stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people*. God stills storms of wind and water; He also stills the tumults of human hearts. Suddenly the whole episode comes into our own world to speak of the power of Jesus to still the storm of fear, the restlessness of worry and pressure, the waves of guilt, the ground swells of lust.

2. The next dramatic narrative (vv. 26-40) seems to be an illustration on the personal level of what Christ did on the sea at the physical level. The story is

almost frightening in its terrible accuracy. It is not enough to say only that the man of Gadara was insane. He was at the very least insane. More than that, there was something devilish, demonic about his condition. People bound him with chains as if they could control his inner violence. They separated him from society as if they could protect their safe world from the threat of his existence. But he was bound inwardly more surely than any chains could bind him. He was in isolation, but the terrible destructiveness of his condition only turned inward and made him self-abusive. Here is the condition of the man in the grip of sin and under the dominion of the demonic power of evil. If we think the picture is overdrawn, it means only that we have not looked the facts of our present world fully in the face. The language of the story comes from the first century, but the reality of the power of evil in a man's life comes straight out of the twentieth.

The whole point of the narrative is this: Jesus Christ is Sovereign over the dark, demonic powers of evil. There was no power, no ability in this man to control his own destiny. Left alone, there was no end but destruction; but Jesus came and brought a healing, creative power that utterly transformed him and his way of life. This is a crucial matter. Jesus Christ can do this for such men as we are—caught in our guilts and self-destructive patterns of living, sick of ourselves, not having even the heart to want to do better. Either He can set men free from the tyranny and the insanity of sin or else we are hopelessly lost among the graves of our dead hopes and futile struggles. There is really no other alternative.

What a contrast is painted in the closing scene! Here now is a real, whole person, new life flowing through his mind and spirit, suddenly unfitting him for life among the tombs. He is in right relationship with himself, in both mind and body, in right relationship with other persons, and in right relationship with his environment because he is in right relationship with God. Evil spirits always seek embodiment, are always destructive, and always must bow to the presence and power of Jesus the Messiah.

3. The third episode of this section (vv. 41-56) is the story of a healing that interrupted a healing. Jairus' daughter had known 12 years of life and light, now closing in the darkness of death. An unnamed woman had known 12 years of suffering and despair, now turning to hope and life in the presence of Jesus. Someone said that her misery was as old as Jairus' daughter. Jairus came to Jesus because his situation was beyond all human help. That is also the reason the woman came.

The woman's faith, at the first, was probably half hope and half superstition.

She evidently thought that healing power was in Jesus in such a way that she could take some without His knowing it. It was not far from a magic view. Yet when she touched His clothes she was indeed healed. It wasn't perfect faith, but it was all she knew to do, and behind it were the urgency and desperation of 12 terrible years of humiliating, chronic hemorrhaging. She may have been wrong about the garments but she had come to the right Person. It is not perfect faith our Lord demands; it is faith in Him. It is not weak faith or imperfect faith but *unfaith* that stops the flow of divine grace.

When she touched Jesus, her physical ailment was gone. She knew it and He knew it. Why didn't Jesus simply smile to himself over her new joy and health and go on His way? Instead He brought both her malady and her new health out into the open. In doing this He took the whole situation out of the realm of magic and put it into the realm of personal relationship and faith. Thus she experienced a wholeness of life and a wholeness of faith in Messiah.

The chapter climaxes with the triumph of the Messiah over death. When word came that Jairus' daughter was dead, Jesus responded, *Fear not* (v. 50). All through Luke's Gospel this phrase has recurred; it is the consistent message of God to men when they are confronted with the ultimate issues of life. The scoffers were removed, and in an atmosphere of faith and trust Jesus took the child's hand and gave her back her life. There is no dark tragedy beyond the range of Messiah's power. Even death must yield before the powers of the kingdom of God.

LUKE 9

The Mission of the Twelve

Luke 9:1-9

- 1 Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases.
- 2 And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick.
- 3 And he said unto them, Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money; neither have two coats apiece.
- 4 And whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart.
- 5 And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them.
- 6 And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing every where.
- 7 Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done by him: and he was perplexed, because that it was said of some, that John was risen from the dead;
- 8 And of some, that Elias had appeared; and of others, that one of the old prophets was risen again.

9 And Herod said, John have I beheaded: but who is this, of whom I hear such things? And he desired to see him.

The preaching tour described at the beginning of chapter 8 was composed of Jesus, the Twelve, and others, including the women who supported the group from their own means. In this passage Jesus sent out the Twelve without any resources except the power of their message and the dynamic of their Lord. The mission was an extension of His own ministry, and His commission to them was to do precisely what He himself had been doing. No more is told of the mission in the Gospels. Its purpose was both the gathering of the people of God and the training of the Twelve for the mission that would be theirs after the Resurrection and Pentecost.

1. The instructions Jesus gave the Twelve indicate that their mission would be a short, urgent one. The disciples were to extend Jesus' ministry in Galilee by proclaiming the kingdom of God and calling men to repentance. We notice a subtle change of mood in Jesus during this time. His Galilean ministry was moving toward a close and He was aware of the sinister forces at work against Him. The death of John Baptist (9:9) occurred sometime during this period and probably was an indication to Jesus of the fate ultimately awaiting Him.

2. The Twelve were to travel light, stay only briefly at any one place, accept what hospitality was offered, and give little attention to creature comforts. When rejected anywhere, they were to leave even the dust behind and continue on with good grace. No secondary dependencies were to keep them from their first task.

The orders were specifically for this mission, not for all missions in all times. Yet it was natural that they should become guidelines to the early Christians in their missionary labors; and surely they are pertinent to the contemporary Church, overbagged with programs, organization, and paraphernalia. Equipment does not equal mission! The mission, then and now, is to gather the people of God, to proclaim by word and deed the reign of God, and to bring men and women under its dominion.

3. The response of Herod (vv. 7-9) indicates the impact made upon the people by the ministry of Jesus and the Twelve. Popular thought did not identify Jesus as Messiah, but as John the Baptist raised from the dead or Elijah come back from the past. Though men did not understand the work of Jesus, they did identify Him with the work of God through the prophets. The passage helps to clarify our mental image of the kind of person Jesus was. Though in personality He was very different from John, something about His character, His strength, and the

power of His message made men think both of Elijah, the strong and rugged champion of God in the days of King Ahab, and of John, the bold and stern baptizer with the message of repentance. Both mystery and power characterized the ministry of Jesus in the minds of those who heard Him.

The Feeding of the 5,000

Luke 9:10-17

10 And the apostles, when they were returned, told him all that they had done. And he took them, and went aside privately into a desert place belonging to the city called Bethsaida.

11 And the people, when they knew it, followed him: and he received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing.

12 And when the day began to wear away, then came the twelve, and said unto him, Send the multitude away, that they may go into the towns and country round about, and lodge, and get victuals: for we are here in a desert place.

13 But he said unto them. Give ye them to eat. And they said, We have no more but five loaves and two fishes; except we should go and buy meat for all this people.

14 For they were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, Make them sit down by fifties in a company.

15 And they did so, and made them all sit down.

16 Then he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed them, and brake, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude.

17 And they did eat, and were all filled: and there was taken up of fragments that remained to them twelve baskets.

When the Twelve returned from their mission, Jesus called them aside for a time of rest and renewal. The times were crucial. John the Baptist had been killed; the withdrawal to Bethsaida (out of Herod's jurisdiction) implied, perhaps, that Herod was growing more hostile. The mission was effective, but the crowds did not really perceive the nature of Jesus' person and ministry. The attempt to find retreat was frustrated by the arrival of the crowds who had heard of Him and His works. Through the day and on toward evening He taught them and healed them; then He fed them. All the Gospels portray the event as the climax of the Galilean ministry.

1. Faced by the crowd, with hopelessly inadequate supplies, Jesus took the five loaves and the two fish, looked up to heaven, and *blessed them, and brake, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude* (v. 16). Seen in the context of the proclamation of the kingdom of God, this miracle reveals that the power of the Kingdom not only conquers death, as shown in healings and resurrections, but provides abundant nourishment for life.

The spiritual meaning conveyed by the symbolic acts of Jesus is as significant as the actual miracle of multiplied bread and fish. The breaking of the

bread would undoubtedly remind the Jews of the time in their history when God provided for their needs by sending manna from heaven. In John's account of this event (chapter 6) Jesus deliberately identified himself as the new and greater Moses who provided, not temporary manna, but the very Bread of Life, which was himself. The Jews also had writings that pictured the glorious future as the time of a great banquet. The miracle then had special meaning beyond the bread and fish. Jesus, in feeding the multitude, interpreted himself and offered himself as the Bread of Life; both the Source of life in the Kingdom and the Means of fellowship within it.

2. Later Christians have frequently related the feeding of the 5,000 to the Lord's Supper. In Galilee, He broke the bread for the people. In the Upper Room, He broke the bread, saying: *This is my body* (22:19). The words used to describe the acts of Jesus in Galilee are the very ones used of His acts at the Last Supper. He took, blessed, broke, gave. The hillside banquet in Galilee was a symbolic expression of Christ's self-giving for the life of the world. The 12 basketfuls remaining, one from each of the Twelve, probably symbolize the new Israel, represented in the Twelve, who were to continue to share the bread of life.

The Great Confession and Transfiguration

Luke 9:18-36

18 And it came to pass, as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him: and he asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am?

19 They answering said, John the Baptist; but some say, Elias; and others say, that one of the old prophets is risen again.

20 He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am? Peter answering said, The Christ of God.

21 And he straitly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man that thing;

22 Saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day.

23 And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

24 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.

25 For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?

26 For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.

27 But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God.

28 And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray.

29 And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering.

30 And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias:

31 Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.
32 But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him.
33 And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said.
34 While he thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud.
35 And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.
36 And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone. And they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen.

Peter's confession of the messiahship of Jesus was a watershed or crucial dividing point in the ministry of Jesus. From this time the direction of His life was toward Jerusalem and toward the Cross. The confession was followed by Jesus' first prediction of His own death and the call for His disciples to take the cross and follow Him. The group shortly left Galilee and slowly moved southward to the Holy City.

When Jesus first came to Galilee, He preached to large crowds in the local synagogues. Rising opposition from synagogue officials moved Him out around the shores of the lake, where He taught great crowds that came to Him from all over Palestine. Popular enthusiasm for Him was high, though generally undiscerning and shallow. On the other hand, the attitude of official Judaism had settled into clear-cut opposition.

All this time the disciples had been observing, listening, and participating in His healing and teaching ministry. The time was ripe for the clear revelation of himself and the nature of His mission. It is characteristic of Luke that he relates the event to the prayer life of Jesus.

1. Jesus deliberately initiated the conversation destined to change the course of the disciples' lives: "*Who do the people say that I am?*" (v. 18, RSV). Their answer revealed that the general public thought of Jesus as someone from God, perhaps a preparer, as John Baptist or Elijah, for some great thing God was about to do.

Jesus pressed the question home to the disciples themselves: "*But who do you say that I am?*" And Peter answered, "*The Christ of God*" (v. 20, RSV). There is no way for us at this point in history to fathom what it meant to those men for Peter to clearly declare their faith that Jesus was the Messiah. In his declaration he gathered up the nation's ancient hopes and dreams. These hopes had been revealed in their Scriptures, confirmed in covenant history, sung in the psalms, illustrated in the crowning of their kings, and refined and clarified in

their prophets. Messianic hope had persisted through all the generations in spite of sinful rebellions, national losses, exiles, and political tyranny. It had taken many forms by the time of the first century, but underneath them all was the enduring hope that Someone would come from God who would be, as James Stewart has written, “the answer to every prayer, the fulfillment of every dream; who would untangle the messed up human affairs and bring in the better day of God.”

Peter expressed the faith of these 12 men that in the Person before them, Jesus of Nazareth, the messianic hope was fulfilled. His declaration is the continuing affirmation of Christians through the centuries: Jesus is the anointed Leader from God who brings to fulfillment the purposes of God. He is God's own anointed Son with sovereign power.

2. Yet Jesus charged them to tell no one (v. 21). This was not too surprising. Jesus taught and healed with the power of God but had never publicly claimed to be Messiah. Why? Because He was not the kind of Messiah they were looking for. For centuries the people had dreamed of Messiah, but mostly in political terms. They wanted someone to come from God who would lift their nation out of oppression and restore the throne of David. Jesus could not fan the flames of these false hopes. He did not come to fulfill the expectations of the crowds for a messianic Deliverer.

3. What utterly confounded the disciples was Jesus' next word: *The Son of man must suffer ... be rejected ... be slain ... be raised* (v. 22). The parallel accounts of Matthew (16:21-23) and Mark (8:31-33) reveal how astounded and offended the disciples were at this response of Jesus. He was indeed Messiah, but a Messiah like no Jew could ever have imagined. Jesus accepted Peter's confession but immediately reinterpreted the messianic role as one of suffering servanthood. The common ideas of Messiah included power, sovereignty, victory, and divine majesty. What Jesus had to teach the Twelve—and what He was to keep teaching their successors—is that the way of suffering love is God's way of power and mastery. Jesus' suffering was not something added to, but was of the very nature of, His messiahship. He was the mighty, anointed Son of God, who conquered by a cross, who gained infinitely by giving utterly, who died that men might live. Jesus' own self-understanding did not come from the false and self-centered hopes of His contemporaries. It came from His Father's will seen in terms of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53. The crisis truth disclosed in the Great Confession is that Jesus is the Messiah who triumphs by way of a cross.

4. In each of the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus' prediction of His own cross was followed by His admonition to the disciples: Those who follow the Servant-Messiah must take up the cross *daily*. The way of the cross for the Christian is the way of death to the old pattern of the self-life (Romans 6), the way of death to self-dependency. Disciples must live with broken allegiance to the egocentric self and the ambitions and interests of the natural life. Most of those Twelve would later die violent martyr deaths for the cause of the Kingdom. Such a death is always potentially on the horizon for the Christian, and only in daily self-denial is there real preparation for it.

5. Jesus declared that some of those standing there in His presence would see the manifestation of the kingdom of God before their death (v. 27). The Kingdom began to manifest itself in the person of Jesus. The Transfiguration light illuminated it further. The power of the Kingdom was openly revealed in the death and resurrection of Jesus and certified in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Jesus probably had in mind the revelation of the reign of God in the Cross-Resurrection-Pentecost event and declared its certainty to the troubled men around Him.

6. The immediate response of Jesus to the confession of Peter confronted the disciples with the fact that Messiah must suffer and die. The Transfiguration confirmed the obedience of Jesus and was also a foretaste of the glory into which He would enter after His death. His death was inevitable, in the Father's will, and a prelude to the certain glory which would follow.

The transfigured Messiah spoke with Moses and Elijah, probably representatives of the law and the prophets, about His death or His “exodus” (v. 31, literally) which He should accomplish at Jerusalem. Even as the ancient Exodus from the bondage of Egypt was God's great deliverance that created the covenant people of Israel, so the coming death of Christ would be true Exodus—the great deliverance of the new people of God from the tyranny of evil and sin. And to this great new deliverance through the death of Messiah both the law and the prophets bear witness. The talk on the mountain was about His death, but all the while the glory of God was shining through in promise of the power of the Resurrection. The whole event was sealed with the word of the Father, speaking again the word heard at Jesus' baptism: *This is my beloved Son* (v. 35). The Transfiguration experience was both confirmation of Jesus' servant-messiahship and promise of His coming glory.

At the Foot of the Mountain

Luke 9:37-50

37 And it came to pass, that on the next day, when they were come down from the hill, much people met him.

38 And, behold, a man of the company cried out, saying. Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son: for he is mine only child.

39 And, lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out; and it teareth him that he foameth again, and bruising him hardly departeth from him.

40 And I besought thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not.

41 And Jesus answering said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, and suffer you? Bring thy son hither.

42 And as he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him. And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father.

43 And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God. But while they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did, he said unto his disciples, 44 Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men.

45 But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask him of that saying.

46 Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest.

47 And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by him.

48 And said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.

49 And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us.

50 And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us.

A greater contrast cannot be imagined than that of the glory of the mount of transfiguration and the misery of the human need in the valley. The four incidents Luke records reveal doubt, incomprehension and misunderstanding, self-seeking and bigotry on the part of the disciples. The Galilean ministry closed on this note.

1. At the foot of the mount Jesus and the three were met by a desperate father who revealed that the disciples could not heal his epileptic son. Plummer describes the situation clearly: "The chosen three, blinded by the light, the remaining nine baffled by the powers of darkness." Luke's main emphasis seems to be on the lack of faith on the part of the disciples. There was a note of impatience and urgency in Jesus' word: *How long shall I be with you, and suffer you?* (v. 41). These nine had been part of the mission; they had been given authority to heal and cast out demons and proclaim the victory of the kingdom of God. Now they stood helpless and faithless in the face of terrible need.

2. Jesus healed the boy and restored him to his father. Even as the crowd marvelled, Jesus again pressed upon His disciples the fact of His coming death. This second prediction of the Passion (v. 44) found them as unprepared as they

were at His first prediction (v. 22). They did not understand and were afraid to ask. Evidently He did not explain. A suffering, dying Servant-Messiah was so far from their ideas of messiahship that the words of Jesus did not penetrate. Indeed it was not until after the Resurrection that the disciples really understood the sayings of Jesus about His death.

3. Their sense of insecurity and fear evidently turned them inward and centered their thoughts upon themselves. Perhaps their thoughts were running ahead to the triumph of the Messiah, and they began to argue about who would be greatest in the new messianic order. Perhaps this was why they could not understand or accept Jesus' prediction of His passion. He spoke of suffering and servanthood while they were seeking recognition and precedence. Jesus responded by bringing a child close to His side. What a reversal of values and status! To love a child and seek to serve—this is the true greatness.

4. Caird reminds us that “where there is self-importance, jealousy and intolerance will not be very far away.” The stranger who cast out devils (v. 49) would be a special threat to the disciples who themselves were so recently unable to heal the epileptic boy. The success of the “strange exorcist” would be particularly galling.

Jesus' response was a rebuke not only to John but to all who would confine the work of God to the authorized channels and approved methods. There is, indeed, a mystery of the Kingdom. The work of God is accomplished in ways and means beyond our ken and our control.

The Road to Jerusalem—the Teaching Messiah

Luke 9:51—19:27

The central section of Luke is something of an enigma to biblical scholars. It begins with a picture of Jesus with His face steadfastly set to go to Jerusalem, yet very little is said about His actual journey. The opening mood is one of urgency, yet the section is filled with teachings that have no particular geographical setting or hurried style.

Luke's intention is not so much to describe a journey as to portray the teaching Messiah. However, the teachings of Messiah are to be understood in the context of the journey to Jerusalem. Jesus' sayings in this section have special significance because they are spoken by One who knew who He was and who knew that He was on His way to die; and who moved with “all deliberate speed” toward the God-ordained climax of His life.

Rejection in Samaria and the Would-be Followers

Luke 9:51-62

51 And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, 52 And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him.

53 And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.

54 And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?

55 But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.

56 For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.

57 And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.

58 And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.

59 And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.

60 Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.

61 And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.

62 And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

It is well known that the relationships between Jews and Samaritans were not

cordial. Jesus was going from Galilee in the north to Jerusalem in the south, and Samaria was in between. The ire of the Samaritans was raised because Jesus was obviously headed for Jerusalem. James and John responded in kind. Jesus' mission, however, was not to destroy, but to fulfill. He had been rejected in His hometown at the beginning of His ministry; here He was rejected by the Samaritans. Later He was rejected in Judea and Jerusalem. Finally He accomplished His task of redemptive suffering all alone—on a cross.

1. This rejection, as well as the coming Passion, form the context for the narrative of the three halfhearted followers. The first one said: “*I will follow you wherever you go*” (v. 57, RSV). Did he know that the Man to whom he spoke was on His way to the Cross? To follow Jesus means no permanent roots, no final habitat in this world. *Here have we no continuing city* (Heb. 13:14).

2. The second man was one Jesus himself sought, found, and challenged to preach the gospel. But the man wanted to wait until his elderly father was dead and buried and the affairs of the estate seen to before responding. Did he know that the Man who challenged him was on the way to His own burial? The spiritually dead can take care of the dead. Jesus' challenge to this would-be follower was, “Come alive! Be caught up in the life and movement of the Kingdom!”

3. The third man was gripped with indecision. The ties of affection called him to linger for the full benefits of his fond farewells. Did he know that the Man he wanted, eventually, to follow had left behind His home and shop and mother and family?

The meaning of all this is clear. The call to discipleship is top priority. It permits no rivals. To heed the call of Jesus means to assume the mission of Jesus. The demands He made on these men are the very demands made upon himself as He began the journey to Jerusalem. He had nowhere to lay His head. He left the dead to bury their dead. He himself put His hand to the plow and did not look back. He fully accepted the path and role designed for Him in the will of His Father. He committed himself utterly and there was no turning back.

LUKE 10

The Mission of the Seventy

Luke 10:1-24

1 After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his

face into every city and place, whither he himself would come.

2 Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.

3 Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves.

4 Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes: and salute no man by the way.

5 And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house.

6 And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again.

7 And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house.

8 And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you:

9 And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.

10 But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, 11 Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.

12 But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city.

13 Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.

14 But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you.

15 And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell.

16 He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.

17 And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.

18 And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.

19 Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

20 Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.

21 In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.

22 All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.

23 And he turned him unto his disciples, and said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see:

24 For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.

Chapter 8 began with an informal preaching tour on which Jesus was accompanied by the disciples and the women; chapter 9 began with the sending of the Twelve, commissioned with authority to preach and heal; chapter 10 begins with the sending of the Seventy. Luke presents this material in such a way as to show both the growth of the movement and the growing urgency of the mission.

The section falls naturally into four parts, the instructions (vv. 1-12), the woes

(vv. 13-16), the return (vv. 17-20), and the exultation of Jesus (vv. 21-24).

1. The sending of the Seventy very closely parallels the sending of the Twelve in chapter 9. The number 70 was the number of the nations of earth in Genesis 10; it was also the number of elders appointed by Moses (Numbers 11); it also was the number of members of the Sanhedrin. It probably represented the mission reaching out to encompass all nations. The mission anticipated the later mission of the Early Church to the Gentiles, as reported in Acts.

Jesus' instructions indicate that the time was ripe but the journey would be dangerous. The men were to travel light and not waste time, because the mission was urgent. The Seventy declared the message of the presence of the Kingdom with power and authority. Whether or not men responded, the reign of God was present. It is a reign of peace to those who respond, a reign of doom for those who do not.

2. The woes pronounced upon the cities indicate that the mission was not only to individuals. The cities of the nation and finally the nation itself had to choose between the true vocation of humble, self-denying service as the covenant people or false pride and nationalism. There was a finality and a seriousness about the mission. The Seventy spoke and acted with the authority of Christ himself. Those who rejected faced the same consequences they would face if Jesus himself had preached to them.

3. The disciples returned rejoicing because demons were subject to them. Their victory was confirmed by Jesus, who *beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven* (v. 18). Both here and in 11:20, Jesus indicated that victory over Satan was a sign of the breakthrough of the reign of God into the world. In Jesus the power of God has thrust itself into the world dominated by Satan and fast-bound by sin. Satan's power is broken; he has fallen. The final victory is not complete, but it is sure. E. Earle Ellis in his commentary on Luke illustrates this victory by the ancient story of Belshazzar (Daniel 5). King Belshazzar's guests continued to feast, unaware that his kingdom had fallen and his doom had been sealed. All they saw was some handwriting on the wall which they could not read! Satan's kingdom has fallen—the handwriting is on the wall. Christian disciples are to declare the fact of Satan's doom and interpret the signs.

4. There is, however, a note of warning. The Seventy rejoiced in this power to cast out demons. Jesus warned them that “pride goeth ... before a fall.” Their ancient literature attributed the fall of Satan to pride. Their true glory was not in their achievements but in their relationship to God.

5. The exultation of Jesus is a high point of inspiration and revelation in the New Testament. Jesus rejoiced in the victory of His followers and was thankful that they shared a knowledge of God that the wise and powerful of earth have rejected. God's eternal purpose of grace is that those who respond in the humility and trust of a child shall indeed enter the Kingdom.

6. Christ spoke clearly here of His sovereign and unique relation to the Father. He was in full self-awareness as the Son of God, to whom all things have been delivered, to whom all things have been revealed. He is the only One who knows the Father fully and completely, and He is the only One through whom saving knowledge of the Father may come. This does not mean that there is no knowledge of God at all apart from what is revealed in Jesus. It does mean that Jesus is the Human Embodiment of God and not some exalted human chosen by God to tell us about Him. The God we know is the God revealed in Jesus Christ. We know God in other relationships because of His supreme self-revelation in Jesus. Only Jesus knows the Father utterly, for He shares the divine nature—only the Father knows the Son utterly, for He is His Only Begotten from eternity.

But it is the Father's will to reveal himself to men through His Son. The Son does not hide or cover the saving purposes of God. He reveals them, brings them to us where we are, and brings into our human situation the very life of God. Matthew's parallel section closes with the invitation, *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest* (11:28).

7. The disciples were blessed because they had the privilege of living and seeing the historical manifestation of God in His Son. Jesus is the Climax of all history. All the revelations of God in ages past find their fulfillment in Him. Here, *when the fulness of the time was come* (Gal. 4:4), God's own Son was *manifest in the flesh* (1 Tim. 3: 16), and these men were there not only to view, but to see, to know, to share. Blessed indeed!

Yet the word of the Lord to Thomas applies: "*Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe*" (John 20:29, RSV).

The Good Samaritan

Luke 10:25-37

25 And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

26 He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?

27 And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.

28 And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.
 29 But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?
 30 And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.
 31 And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.
 32 And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.
 33 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, 34 And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.
 35 And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.
 36 Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?
 37 And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

The lawyer put the question to Jesus in order to discredit Him. Or perhaps to engage Him in an argument intended to belittle Him or keep His claims at arm's length. The question of eternal life would be natural in the light of Jesus' preaching about the reign of God and life in the Kingdom. Questions of this sort were probably often asked Jesus in the course of His teaching ministry. It was characteristic of the teaching method of Jesus that He did not answer plainly the questions of listeners, but rather responded in such a way that the questioner was forced to face the issue and answer for himself. He was never content to have a theoretical discussion.

1. Jesus responded to the lawyer's question by sending him back to his source of wisdom, *What is written in the law?* (v. 26). Everyone, including Jesus, seemed satisfied with the lawyer's reply: Love God and love neighbor. The spirit and intent of the law were fulfilled in this formula. So far, however, it was only a formula, and the lawyer wasn't satisfied: *Who is my neighbour?* (v. 29).
2. Jesus could have said, "Whoever needs your help." Instead, He told the story of the Good Samaritan—and His words have never been forgotten.

The priest and the Levite represented religious legalism. They saw the man, yet *passed by on the other side* (vv. 31-32). They were involved in religious activities and they did not want to contaminate themselves. They kept true to the legalities and failed to keep true to the great commandment. The despised Samaritan was nearer the Kingdom than the Israelites because he acted the meaning of the commandment even though he failed in the legalities.

3. The original question was how to get eternal life. The truth is that the great

commandment to love God and love neighbor is not adequate—because men do not, in fact, keep the commandment. Jewish legalism, all legalism, makes it impossible to keep the command to love. The priest and Levite demonstrate that. They maintained their ceremonial cleanness; they kept their appointments, fulfilled their obligations, and left the man to die.

As Helmut Thielicke says, we need to identify ourselves with the priest and Levite and repent! The issue is real and pressing: Shall we live by law or by love? Is eternal life won by legal observance? Are we to set moral limits on our behavior? Jesus teaches that love is the very life of the Kingdom and there are no limits to its obligations. The Kingdom breaks through our legalisms, our customs, our prejudices, our theory and logic and calls us to act in love.

The story is told by the one who is the Good Samaritan to us! He came all the way to our side of the road, to the side of broken humanity, took to himself the sins and sorrows, and brought new life and hope.

There is no escape from the final word: *Go, and do thou likewise* (v. 37).

Martha and Mary

Luke 10:38-42

38 Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.

39 And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word.

40 But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.

41 And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things:

42 But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

Jesus is still the Teacher on the move. In the home of Mary and Martha, He is revealed as the One who speaks the word of God. His concern is more to minister than to be ministered to. Perhaps there is in the narrative a parable of discipleship, one kind leading to distraction, the other to meditation.

1. Martha was the hostess. Her meal preparation and service were motivated by hospitality and generosity and love. But she became involved beyond her strength. The next step was irritation leading to the sharp complaint, “*Lord, do you not care?*” (v. 40, RSV). The issue was not the service and love; it was the distraction. The question is not one of two kinds of service, one of ministry and the other of worship, or one as layman and the other as preacher. It is a question of busyness that pulls apart and diverts either one from the Word of God, which

is the Source of effectiveness.

2. As Ellis has put it, Martha's concern was to be a proper hostess, Mary's to be a proper disciple. It is difficult to see that Jesus could approve of Martha doing all the work while Mary did nothing. The story points to Mary's finer sense of values in the balance between feverish activity and worshipful attentiveness to the word of God. The *New English Bible* translation is: "*The part that Mary has chosen is best*" (v. 42). "The supreme office of hospitality is to bring to the Lord's teaching an attentive and lowly heart" (Manson).

LUKE 11

In Prayer and Persistence

Luke 11:1-13

- 1 And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.
- 2 And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.
- 3 Give us day by day our daily bread.
- 4 And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.
- 5 And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him. Friend, lend me three loaves;
- 6 For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him?
- 7 And he from within shall answer and say. Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.
- 8 I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.
- 9 And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.
- 10 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.
- 11 If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?
- 12 Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?
- 13 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

The prayer life of Jesus, so clearly revealed in Luke, must have deeply impressed the disciples. Desiring to pray as He did and aware that John Baptist had taught his disciples a form of prayer, one of them said, *Lord, teach us to pray* (v. 1). The prayer as found in Matthew 6 is a little bit longer and more stylized. It was given there in the context of sincerity and reality in acts of

worship. It was given to persons for whom prayer had become rote, routine, and empty. The context here in Luke indicates that the disciples had become discouraged and needed to learn how to pray confidently, to persevere in prayer and not give up.

Both the prayer form and the sayings that follow show how strongly Jesus believed in consistent, insistent, persevering prayer and how confident He was that such prayer would not go unheeded or unanswered.

1. The prayer is brief and simple, but comprehensive. The five petitions are first for God's greater glory and then for our human needs. The address, *Father*, carries with it both reverent, worshipful respect and intimate, confident fellowship. For Jesus, the fatherhood of God was not a theological commonplace; it was an intimate and intensely personal relationship, and He taught His disciples to pray with the same trusting familiarity. The name of God means the whole character of the personal God as known or manifested. To call on God's name is to involve His character and claim His promise. To hallow His name means to treat it as holy and sacred, to reverence Him with our words and our lives. The Kingdom means the kingly rule. The kingdom of God was fully manifested in Jesus Christ. In Him the sovereign rule of God was perfectly expressed. The Kingdom has come, yet we are to pray for the Kingdom to come because it has not yet spread through all the earth. God is sovereign but His sovereignty is not yet recognized in all men's hearts.

Creatures of dependence who live in hope, we need both bread for the table and bread for the soul. We deeply depend on the faithfulness and abundance of God's nourishing grace in Jesus, the Bread of Life. The bread we receive is bread to share, *our* daily bread, not *my* daily bread. We need to pass the bread at God's family table. In the mind of Jesus, forgiveness is as important as bread. The unfed are dead, the unforgiven are damned. We are hopeless debtors! The forgiveness is not one-directional. It comes down from God; it must reach out to our brother. There is no way to avoid temptation. Our prayer must be, "Keep us in the testing time, save us from playing with evil, keep us from the trials and the lures that will be too much for us." God help us! How often we pray this prayer and then flirt with passion and tease with sin as though we were strong and the devil were weak!

2. The parable of the friend with the midnight request carries the unspoken conclusion: If importunity and persistence will do what friendship won't do on the human level, how much more will importunity and persistence avail with

God, who loves us and wills our good and never sleeps! Therefore we are to ask and seek and knock in full confidence and trust. God's good and precious gifts are given to those who value them and therefore seek until they receive. William Manson's comment is illuminating: "There are things in God's gift which a man has never had: therefore 'ask.' There are things which he has had but which have been lost: therefore 'seek.' There are doors which he longs to see opened, opportunities which he fain would possess: therefore 'knock.' In each case an answer will be given."

Even earthly fathers in their weakness and sinfulness will not deceive the honest asking of their children; *how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?* (v. 13). In Matt. 7:11 the word is that God will give *good things*. Luke understands that the great and good thing, in which all other good things are included, is God himself, giving His own Spirit to those who ask Him.

3. Jesus gave great assurance to our praying. We should never doubt that when we pray to the Father, out of real need, our prayer will be answered.

Two basic truths emerge here. One is that the One to whom we pray is our Heavenly Father. Our approach to Him, then, will be as children who are confident of His love and power, and who are submissive to His will, knowing that, whether He gives or withholds, His answer is the answer of infinite mercy and wisdom.

The other basic truth is that the Father is always ready to give His best Gift, His Holy Spirit, to those who ask Him. John Knox reminds us that this best Gift is the one Gift He cannot give without our asking, because it is the Gift of himself. A father may give *things* to his children without their request, but the full giving of *himself* can be made only in response to real asking and real openness to receive.

"Father, give me Thy Holy Spirit." When that simple request is made in the urgency shown by the friend at midnight (v. 5), it will not go unheeded or unanswered. This is the clear promise of Jesus himself. The request in one sense is final and decisive. We ask for and receive the Spirit of God. In another sense, our whole life of prayer is one of asking and seeking and receiving the filling and overflowing of the Holy Spirit. The gift to be received is a new quality of life to be lived.

G. Campbell Morgan shares the insight that the rest of this chapter in Luke is related to the Gift of the Spirit. In verses 11-26 it is revealed that Jesus cast out

demons by the power of the Spirit (the finger, or the activity of God); and as Master of the house, casts out the strong usurper, the devil.

In the next section (vv. 27-28), Jesus corrects false ideas of family relationships and shows a higher bond than that of flesh and blood, a relationship in the Spirit that is lived out in obedience.

In the last section of the chapter (vv. 29-36) Jesus rebukes those who seek for external signs and declares himself to be the true Jonah sign through His death and resurrection. That powerful sign became a reality at Pentecost when the promised Spirit came.

God gives His Spirit to those who ask Him. The Spirit is the secret of power over Satan, Source of right relation with our Lord, and the authenticating Sign of His lordship, and the Authority of our witness.

“Father, give me Thy Holy Spirit!”

The Two Kingdoms

Luke 11:14-28

14 And he was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake; and the people wondered.

15 But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils.

16 And others, tempting him, sought of him a sign from heaven.

17 But he, knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth.

18 If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub.

19 And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges.

20 But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.

21 When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace:

22 But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.

23 He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.

24 When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out.

25 And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished.

26 Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.

27 And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked.

28 But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.

The works of Jesus, especially exorcisms, or casting out of demons, were such that they demanded explanation. There was no question that demons were being cast out. The question was, By whom? In this episode the power of Jesus

was attributed to Beelzebub. Beelzebub is a term of abuse, “Lord of flies,” or “Lord of dung,” linked with the chief of demons or Satan. Jesus was, in effect, insultingly accused of being possessed by a demon. The incident is especially important because in His response Jesus himself gave the meaning and significance of His miracles. It is not just that a dumb man was able to speak again. The fact that Jesus was able to cast out the demon meant that He was stronger than the demon and was the rightful and able Master of the situation usurped and held by Satan.

1. They said Jesus cast out devils by the power of the devil. Jesus appealed to their reason. He was not casting out the little devils by the power of the big devil. No, Satan was not committing suicide. What was happening was that the power of the kingdom of God was breaking up the kingdom of Satan. When Jesus used the phrase “finger of God” (v. 20), He recalled the conflict between God and Pharaoh at the time of the Exodus when the mighty, non-imitatable works of God were said to have been by the “finger of God” (Exod. 8:19). The phrase was also used in connection with the giving of the law and the establishment of the covenant at Mount Sinai (Exod. 31:18). In Ps. 8:3 it is declared that the creation of the heavens was the work of the fingers of God. The term, then, was used in connection with the mighty, decisive acts of God, creation, Exodus, covenant. It can be no accident that Jesus used it in connection with the casting out of demons. His exorcisms were manifesting God's great act of deliverance for man from the dominion and the power of Satan.

2. Satan is the *strong man, fully armed, who guards his own palace* (v. 21, RSV). Jesus is the *stronger man who overcomes him, takes away his armor, and divides his spoil* (v. 22, RSV). The strong Son of God, the victorious Servant, has penetrated Satan's domain. We are keenly aware that Satan's house is not yet mastered fully and that his power is not finished. But there is a greater fact than the fact of Satan. There is a greater reality than the reality of evil. It is the wondrous fact that Jesus has entered the arena of the struggle. He has penetrated the stronghold of the enemy and through death and resurrection has won the decisive victory. The ultimate victory awaits the consummation, but there is no question concerning the final triumph (1 John 3:8). Christians therefore hope, not because they have closed their eyes to the reality and extent of evil, but because they have opened wide their eyes to the power of God in Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen Lord, the Master of the house!

3. In the wilderness temptation Satan offered Jesus the kingdoms of the world

and their glory (4:6-8). Jesus refused to yield to or compromise with his dominion. He rather broke Satan's grip, seized the authority of the usurper, and wrested the kingdom from him. He did not bow to Satan's domain; He attacked it at its very roots, broke the devil's power, set his prisoners free, and gave abundant promise of total victory.

4. In awareness of the awful reality of the conflict and the ultimate issues involved, the disciple cannot be indecisive. He will gather or he will scatter. The confrontation of the two kingdoms allows for no neutrality. The parable of the empty house (vv. 24-26) expresses this very truth in a more personal way. It is not enough to be clean and neutral. The cleansing of the heart only enables the man to freely enter the conflict, take up his cross, and follow the Servant in the ongoing purposes of God (Rom. 12:1-2). If he does not, his last condition will be worse than his first.

5. The same theme is present in the closing narrative (vv. 27-28). Caught up in the emotional exhilaration of the occasion, someone cried out, "How happy Your mother must be to have a Son like You!" Jesus rebuked the flattery. True blessedness lies in hearing the Word of God and obeying it. Obedient, responsible discipleship is what Jesus demands; and in this, Mary, His mother, takes her place with all other believers.

The Sign of the Kingdom

Luke 11:29-36

29 And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet.

30 For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation.

31 The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.

32 The men of Nineve shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.

33 No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light.

34 The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness.

35 Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness.

36 If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.

In the previous section Jesus rebuked a woman for missing the crucial significance of His mission. Here He accused the crowds of having done the same. The disciples also were in danger of being in the presence of the light to

be both seen and shared, but too filled with darkness to perceive it.

1. The two signs of Jesus (the divine message and the divine power that accompanied it) were a judgment upon the unbelieving generation. In Jesus the divine wisdom, greater than that of Solomon, and the divine proclamation, greater than that of Jonah, were revealed. But the wisdom was not recognized and the proclamation was not heard; not because they were not adequate, but because in unbelief they were refused. The true sign of Jesus himself was lost in the quest for signs. The desire for the spectacular proofs blinded and deafened the people until they neither saw nor heard the authentic manifestation of God. For all their religious practices, they did not recognize the revelation of God when it came.

2. The theme of blind rejection leads naturally to the series of sayings gathered around the theme of light (vv. 33-36). In these sayings, probably spoken to disciples, Jesus declared that light is given, enough to see and recognize and walk in. Jesus himself is the Lamp on the stand, but response is required. If the eye of the beholder is free from hypocrisy and self-will, the light may be seen and received in all-transforming power (1 John 1:7; 2 Cor. 4: 1-6).

Pharisees and Lawyers

Luke 11:37-54

37 And as he spake, a certain Pharisee besought him to dine with him: and he went in, and sat down to meat.

38 And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner.

39 And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness.

40 Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also?

41 But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you.

42 But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

43 Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets.

44 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them.

45 Then answered one of the lawyers, and said unto him, Master, thus saying thou reproachest us also.

46 And he said, Woe unto you also, ye lawyers! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers.

47 Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them.

48 Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres.

49 Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute:

50 That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation;

51 From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation.

52 Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered.

53 And as he said these things unto them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things:

54 Laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him.

The light of truth in Jesus (vv. 33-36) increasingly revealed and judged the hypocrisy, formalism, and religious ceremonialism within Judaism. This is the fourth time in Luke that the sayings of Jesus are placed in the context of a dinner (5:27 ff., Levi; 7:36, Simon; 10:38, Martha). The starting point of this episode was the astonishment of the host Pharisee that Jesus did not observe the ceremonial washing before the meal. In the gathered woes of this section Jesus spoke to the churchmen of Judaism; but His word was good also for Christian disciples in the Early Church who were, as Acts 15 and Galatians both reveal, in the struggle of the Jewish way of legalism versus the Christian way of faith. His words are also good for us Christian disciples today, who, going around in busy circles, are subject to the centrifugal forces that shift attention from central issues to fringe matters.

1. It is likely that Jesus deliberately omitted the ceremonial washing in order to bring up the question He really wanted to deal with, What makes a person clean (vv. 37-41)? The Pharisees were scrupulous in their observance of external rites and ceremonies. Jesus said that what really mattered was not the cup and the platter, but the inner heart-life. The issue was hypocrisy: outward, ritual purity but inward, moral uncleanness.

The same truth is expressed in the three “woes” of verses 42-44. Jesus did not pronounce a curse on the Pharisees. A good translation is *Alas for you Pharisees!* (NEB). They were painstaking in their tithes, but careless about justice and love. The ancient prophet Micah summarized the point: *What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?* (6:8, RSV). They loved recognition and honor in public gatherings. They were like unmarked graves because their outer holiness concealed their inward decay. Men did not know what they really were and so were contaminated without being aware.

2. The lawyers or scribes were students and interpreters of the law, the legal

experts who were able to make it hard on others while remaining free themselves. They would honor the graves of the ancient prophets while denying in their lives the truths for which the prophets died. Jesus said, *The blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation* (v. 50). The suffering and death of Jesus represent or fulfill the suffering servant ministry of all who went before Him. Jesus is the Supreme Representative of those who suffer at the point of conflict between the willfulness of man and the loving purposes of God. In some way all the self-giving love, all the sufferings, all the martyrdoms, all the redemptive involvement of all men are symbolized in the supreme self-giving of Jesus. It is also true that the generation of Jesus' day was representative of all those generations who for the sake of the status quo would shed innocent blood or allow it to be shed before changing or yielding. His generation somehow symbolized all the self-will and destructive tendencies in men who are the cause of the righteous sufferings of God's people, just as He himself symbolized those sufferings.

Perhaps the climax of this passage is the awful truth that not only did these men reject Jesus; their influence caused others to reject Him.

LUKE 12

Guidance for Tested Disciples

Luke 12:1-12

1 In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all. Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

2 For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known.

3 Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.

4 And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.

5 But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.

6 Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?

7 But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.

8 Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God:

9 But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.

10 And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto

him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven.

11 And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say:

12 For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.

In this section the journeying Messiah, moving toward His cross, prepared His disciples for their times of testing. It was a period of great popularity, yet underneath a somber mood persisted. As the time of His death drew nearer, as Jewish hostility increased, the disciples felt the growing sense of separation, of testing, of challenge and antagonism. Jesus prepared them for this eventuality, and for the testing and persecution that would inevitably come after the full revelation of His messiahship in the event of the Cross, the Resurrection, and Pentecost. He spoke to them of their need for personal integrity; for reverent, total trust in God; and for reliance upon the Holy Spirit.

1. In the previous section Jesus denounced the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and lawyers. In this one He used the hypocrisy of the Pharisees as an object lesson for His disciples. Of course not all Pharisees were hypocrites. But Jesus saw that their teaching led, almost inevitably, to the separation of the outward and the inward life, and He exposed it without mercy. There appears to be a dual meaning to the words of Jesus in verses 2 and 3. He spoke no doubt of the danger of hypocrisy in the disciples and made them know that the time was coming when all things would be brought to light and no pretense or falseness in their lives could remain hidden.

His words constituted, from this point of view, a call to openness and repentance; a call to total inner and outer honesty, full exposure to the light of God. From another point of view, His words implied that soon the truth of His person and work would be openly revealed. In the Cross, Resurrection, and Pentecost events the truth of the gospel would be fully manifested. What they had been whispering now, they would be shouting then.

2. Jesus indicated that the time of the full revelation of His messiahship and lordship would be both a time of victory and a time of great testing and trial. In the time of pressure the disciples would be tempted to cover their witness to save themselves or escape by making deals with men. Jesus seems to speak here with strong emotion. His followers are not to trust their lives to men nor fear what men may do; they are rather to fear God, who ultimately controls their destiny. Fear of God removes other and lesser fears, because the character of God is trustworthy. He cares and provides for His creatures in love. His children are safe in His hands.

3. The closing paragraph (vv. 8-12) pictures the disciples on trial for their faith. They dare not be hypocrites like the Pharisees. They dare not hedge nor deny their faith in the Son of Man, the Messiah. Not only their witness, but their eternal destiny is at stake.

It is in the context of trial that we have the words of Jesus about the unforgivable sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God is the One who brings truth and reveals the truth (cf. John 16:13). To blaspheme the Spirit is not simply to use swearwords; it is to reject, deny, scoff at the truth of God; and there is no salvation in falsehood. It is not that God is not willing to forgive, but to reject God's Spirit is to reject God's way of acting in forgiveness; it is to cut off or reject the Source of forgiveness.

There is an intimate relation between the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the acknowledgment of Christ. It is the Holy Spirit who bears witness to Christ and enables His disciples to confess Him as Lord (John 15:26; 16:13, 15; 1 Cor. 12:3). The disciples then are to trust the Holy Spirit and keep faith and integrity even in the deepest crisis, knowing that they are in the hands of the loving God and that His Spirit will keep faith with them as they make their honest, open confession of Christ.

The Goals of Life in the Kingdom

Luke 12:13-34

13 And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.

14 And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?

15 And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

16 And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

17 And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

18 And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

20 But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

21 So Is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

22 And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on.

23 The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.

24 Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls?

25 And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit?
 26 If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest?
 27 Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.
 28 If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?
 29 And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind.
 30 For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.
 31 But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.
 32 Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.
 33 Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.
 34 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Jesus had a way of answering questions that caused the questioner to both judge and be judged. He did not give easy or glib answers. The question about the inheritance gave Him occasion to teach His followers about the abiding meaning and value of life. Those who heard had homes and possessions, more or less. Jesus had nowhere to lay His head, no property and no possessions. Yet He lived fully, utterly, and knew the real meaning of life. His words have special significance both to those who have much and want more and those who have little and want more.

1. Rabbis were accustomed to giving legal judgments; but when Jesus was asked to speak to the reluctant brother about the division of the inheritance (vv. 13-15), He replied instead with the piercing word, *Beware of covetousness*. Jesus is not so much concerned with the legal decision as with the heart attitudes and personal relationships. Paul Tournier, in his book *To Resist or to Surrender*, writes of several specific cases where impossible conditions existed, such as employer-employee tension, in-law tension, etc. No resolution of the conflicts was evident. Careful analysis brought no answer; not even prayer for guidance helped. It was when the personal element was made central instead of the issue of conflict that new and solving perspectives were found. The key was treating the *person* as supremely important instead of the *problem*. The law could force the brother to divide the inheritance, perhaps, but it could not heal the division between the brothers until the heart was cleansed of covetousness.

2. The same theme runs through the parable of the rich fool that follows (vv. 16-21). The six "I's" and five "my's" of the brief account of the farmer reveal a value reversal that put possessions in the center instead of the person. He realized too late that in gaining his possessions he had lost his own person. Building his barns, he had destroyed his being. Then God's reality broke in and

his falseness was exposed. Jesus dealt as decisively and as severely with this kind of “hypocrisy” as He ever did with the hypocrisy of the Pharisees.

3. The problem of the disciples was not earthly riches; it was anxiety (vv. 22-31). The words must be taken seriously. Jesus had previously said, “*Blessed are you poor*” (6:20, RSV). It was not in the context of abundance that Jesus said, “*Do not be anxious*” (v. 22, RSV); it was in the context of poverty, spoken to poor men by a poorer Man. Men of the Kingdom are to live without worry for their food and clothing. In vv. 8-12, Jesus spoke of the disciple's need for integrity and courage in the crisis of trial. Here He spoke of the need for faith and trust in the long haul of daily life, lest preoccupation with material things erode the commitment to discipleship. The God who knows what His creatures need, and provides it, knows what His children need and provides for their freedom from fear and worry. The Kingdom must be first for Kingdom men. Then all else is in right perspective.

4. But it is possible to be worried about the Kingdom (vv. 32-34)! The anxieties of this life can cause the disciple to lose heart or lose faith in the reality and power of the Kingdom. Though the flock is small, the Kingdom is great and it is the Father's will to give it. Christ's reign is forever; He has made His sovereignty known. All that we ever need is within His resources. We may live in confident trust, not hoarding, holding back, and keeping only ourselves supplied. Our real treasure is in God. Our hearts' concerns must be there too.

The Coming Crisis for the Disciples

Luke 12:35-48

35 Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning;

36 And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.

37 Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching; verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.

38 And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants.

39 And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through.

40 Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

41 Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?

42 And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?

43 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

44 Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath.

45 But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the

menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken;

46 The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.

47 And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.

48 But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

The atmosphere of crisis pervades this passage. Jesus not only prepared the disciples for the crisis of His coming death, but here (for the first time in Luke) He looked ahead to the crisis of His coming again. The theme of judgment underlies the sayings of Jesus in the entire section from 12:35 to 13:9. His death was not only a time of profound crisis for himself; it was a time of severe testing for the disciples and a time of judgment for Israel. However, the main theme of this section appears to be the triumphant return of the Son of Man. No details are given but the emphasis is upon the certainty and the suddenness of His coming and the need for watchfulness and faithful stewardship on the part of the disciples.

1. In view of the coming crisis the disciples are to have their loins girt and their lamps lit. In a few vivid words Jesus painted the picture of a wedding banquet. The master was absent and all was in readiness for his return. There would be no warning until the knock at the door. The realism of the picture was disrupted by Jesus' word that the master would come and himself serve the alert servants. It is Jesus himself who comes, *not to be ministered unto, but to minister* (Mark 10:45; cf. Luke 22:27).

The parallel parable of the thief in the night speaks, not of the blessedness of the Master's return, but of the unexpectedness and suddenness of it.

2. Peter's interruption brings a subtle change of emphasis in the following section (vv. 41-48). Previously Jesus had spoken of servants; here He speaks of stewards. No doubt Jesus had in mind the role of the disciples in the life of the Church after His death. The theme of the sudden and unexpected return of the Lord is continued, but now the point of concern is the faithful stewardship of the servant-steward. It is likely that, by the time of the writing of Luke, some of the leaders of the Church had become very much like the stewards Jesus described. It was in the context of stewardship and leadership that Jesus spoke of degrees of punishment. Punishment is made proportionate to knowledge and responsibility.

The Coming Crisis for Jesus

Luke 12:49-53

49 I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled?

50 But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!

51 Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division:

52 For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two and two against three.

53 The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.

In this brief and rare unveiling of the inner life of Jesus we see something of His agony as He looks both at His own death and beyond to the results it will bring. The Kingdom cannot come in power until His death; yet His death will bring about decision and rejection and judgment.

1. John Baptist had announced Jesus as the One who would baptize with fire and bring the judgment of God (3: 15-17). Jesus knew that, before that could come to pass, He himself must pass through the baptism of His own death. His death-resurrection was the supreme event toward which all His life had been directed. His purpose in coming was the redemption of men from the bonds of evil and sin by the power of His atoning death. His real work was hindered and narrowed until this was accomplished; and, though He momentarily hesitated at His approaching death, He was inwardly impelled toward the redeeming act.

2. Through His death, however, He set a fire on the earth. Perhaps He meant the fire of the Holy Spirit, who both reveals and cleanses and judges (John 16:8-11), or perhaps He meant that the very fact of the presence of the Kingdom in power on the earth is like a fire that both destroys and purifies, conserves and refines. This is the awesome reality brought about by the presence of God in Christ through the Spirit in our world.

3. It is the only saving power, but it inevitably forces men to decision and so separates them. The word of the gospel does not always fall on men's ears as the word of peace. It comes with the sharp edge of the sword to divide. For that matter it not only divides us from one another; it divides us from ourselves and calls us to separation from our old ways and old selves in radical obedience to His lordship.

The Coming Crisis for Israel

Luke 12:54-59

54 And he said also to the people, When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is.

55 And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass.
 56 Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?
 57 Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?
 58 When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison.
 59 I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite.

The movements of Jesus' life were directed according to His understanding of His Father's will for His life. They were also influenced by His understanding of the “signs of the times” and His sensitivity to the crisis. He was aware of His popularity with the crowds and of His collision course with official Judaism. He perceived the political forces at work in the land. He knew the ramifications of His presence in Palestine and His ministry and death for Israel. But Israel was not perceptive, not discerning. She was drifting blindly toward the abyss, trusting her own resources, not sensing the urgent need to make peace with her Divine Creditor.

1. The western cloud came off the Mediterranean Sea; the south wind came from the Negeb desert. These signs Israel could interpret. What they could not see was that in Jesus *a little cloud ... like a man's hand* (1 Kings 18:44) was present to bring the showers of blessing to Israel. The land was not fallow (Hos. 10:12), and the waters were destined to become the very floods of judgment. The hot winds of God were blowing but Israel did not *discern this time* (v. 56).

“This time” was a crisis time for Israel. The Greek word used is not *chronos*, for the general flow of time, but *kairos*, a special time, a decisive time, a crucial time, a *fateful hour* (v. 56, NEB). It was indeed Israel's fateful hour; inexorable forces were at work that brought Israel to the test; but the nation did not know, did not consider (Isa. 1:3).

2. The closing paragraph of the chapter (vv. 57-59) can be taken out of context and interpreted personally to encourage us to pay our bills and keep out of jail. It seems better to interpret it as part of Jesus' word to Israel. The nation was bankrupt but self-righteous. Jesus challenged the nation to make peace with God by repentance and not by the means of keeping the letter of the law. Far better to settle out of court by grace than to be forced to pay the *very last mite* (v. 59) of legal righteousness. Apart from grace, there is nothing with which to pay the debt.

LUKE 13

The Crisis Calls for Repentance

Luke 13:1-9

- 1 There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.
- 2 And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things?
- 3 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.
- 4 Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?
- 5 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.
- 6 He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.
- 7 Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?
- 8 And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it:
- 9 And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.

This paragraph continues the theme of the closing verses of chapter 12. Israel's crisis is coming; it is, in fact, at hand. And the situation calls for radical repentance. It is a recurrence of the repentance theme of John Baptist. The key issue in the repentance John preached was false dependence upon the religious heritage of the covenant people. *Begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father* (3:8). The key issue in the repentance preached by Jesus in this paragraph is false comparisons. Both John and Jesus struck at the heart of the sin of Israel, self-trust, self-righteousness, self-dependency. The parable of the barren fig tree emphasizes the reality of coming judgment and makes the call to repentance all the more urgent.

1. The Galilean victims of Pilate were probably assumed to be guilty of sedition. They were killed while offering sacrifice in the Temple and their blood was mixed with the blood of the sacrifices. There is no way of knowing why the event was reported to Jesus, whether to give Him general information or to lead Him into some rash statement or to raise the theological issue of suffering and sin. Jesus did not use the occasion to teach that calamity is the judgment of God upon sinners, but rather interpreted both the deliberate massacre and the accidental death caused by the falling tower to signify the death and judgment that are coming to every man. Every death is a call to remembrance of our own death and a call to the renewed spirit of repentance. There is no escape for Israel

because her sin is not so great as others. Judgment is coming and the answer is humble repentance.

2. Israel is like a fig tree that has been singled out for special attention and yet has been unproductive (cf. Isa. 5:1-7). Jesus saw that His mission to Israel was one that would bring to the nation both the opportunity of grace and the inevitability of judgment. The crisis of decision was coming. Were it not for extended mercy, judgment would have come already. In Jesus, the patient, long-suffering grace of God is offered to Israel, but it is the nation's last chance and the time is short.

The call to repentance, then, is profound and urgent. Early Christians who read this in Luke's Gospel would understand it in terms of the tragedies and uncertainty of their times. Later Christians, too, face the tragedy of death and suffering, both accidental and deliberate. We know that at every funeral the "bell tolls" for us and calls us to a repentance that cleanses us from dependency upon our selves and our own relative goodness.

The Power and Growth of the Kingdom

Luke 13:10-21

10 And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath.

11 And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself.

12 And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity.

13 And he laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.

14 And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day.

15 The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering?

16 And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?

17 And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.

18 Then said he, Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and where-unto shall I resemble it?

19 It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.

20 And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God?

21 It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

The healing on the Sabbath and the twin parables that follow reveal both the power and the growth of the Kingdom. Jesus exercised lordship both over the Sabbath and over demons, and in doing so fulfilled the true meaning of the

Sabbath and revealed the power of the Kingdom in the defeat of Satan's reign. The twin parables of the seed and the leaven reveal the growth and ultimate triumph of the Kingdom.

1. This is the last time in Luke's Gospel that Jesus appears in the synagogue. It is clearly revealed in the narrative (vv. 10-17) that there is deep hostility toward Him. The woman was not in immediate danger of death, so Jesus' action was seen by the synagogue leader as a deliberate breaking of the Sabbath law. The Jews released their animals for water without infringing upon the holy day, but would not allow for one of their own people to be released from disease on the Sabbath. They saw in Jesus nothing but a Sabbath breaker; yet Jesus was, by His action, interpreting the meaning of the Sabbath, exercising His lordship of the Sabbath, and revealing the power of the Kingdom over the domination of Satan.

The Sabbath was a reminder that God had delivered them from their bondage in Egypt (Deut. 5:15). It was also a release from the bondage to the work of the week and a foretaste of the coming Sabbath of rest for the people of God (Heb. 4:4-10). For Jesus to break the bondage of Satan in this woman and lead her into the freedom of the Kingdom was not breaking, but fulfilling, the Sabbath. Jews would all agree that God's work of sustaining creation continued on the Sabbath. It was the claim of Jesus that in His actions God was, in fact, continuing His work through healing and deliverance (cf. John 5:1-18).

2. The small and hidden beginnings of the Kingdom belie its power to move into the world with life-changing force (vv. 18-21). There is no teaching here that goodness will ultimately conquer by some inevitable evolutionary process. Rather, Christ's word is that a new force, a new dynamic, a new fact has entered the scene. A seed has been planted; leaven has been placed in the loaf. There will be growth because there is life. The Kingdom has to be reckoned with because it is powerfully present and effectual to make change.

The Narrow Door

Luke 13:22-35

22 And he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem.

23 Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, 24 Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.

25 When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are:

26 Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.

27 But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of

iniquity.

28 There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.

29 And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.

30 And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.

31 The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee.

32 And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to day and to morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.

33 Nevertheless I must walk to day, and to morrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.

34 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!

35 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

Luke reminded his readers that Jesus was still on the way to Jerusalem. Though often interrupted and delayed, the movement was toward the Cross; and Israel—indeed, all mankind—was approaching the crisis of His death. George A. Buttrick, in the *Interpreter's Bible*, sees four sayings of Jesus about the Kingdom in the first section of this scripture. The door is narrow; the time is short; there is no favoritism shown by the Lord to those who would enter; and there will be surprise when men discover God's reversal of their earthly values.

Jesus, moved by the threats of Herod, knew that His mission would be climaxed in Jerusalem, the city so often visited by God through prophet and priest, ritual and law, judgment and deliverance. He foresaw the inevitable tragedy soon to come upon the unrepentant city.

1. The question asked Jesus on the journey was one often discussed among the Jews. Jesus answered it in the same manner He answered the questions of 12:13 and 12:41; that is, in such a way that the true realities of life were revealed, and at the same time the true attitude of the questioner was revealed. In 12:42, Jesus' answer to Peter was, in effect, "I am telling it to whoever will listen, and if you heed it, it is for you." In this passage, Jesus' answer was, in effect: "The question is not how many will be saved. It is, will *you* be saved? Those who will be saved are those who enter by the door. Who will pay the price and enter?"

Perhaps Jesus was thinking of those in Nazareth who, though often in His presence, rejected Him (4:22-30). The parallel section in Matthew applies the saying to the false teachers who claimed to be working for Him (Matt. 7:21-23). Jesus declared a radical reversal of values. The door had been open to the Jews,

but the time was running out. Guarantee of admission was not automatic. Their unrepentance made way, instead, for the Gentiles to come by faith to share the banquet in the great covenant fellowship of the Kingdom.

2. The fox Herod could not deter Jesus, who was aware of the significance of His mission, and certainly aware of the underlying currents of opposition that were blowing toward confrontation and calamity for Him. But He also knew himself to be in the plan and will of His Father. His hour had not come but it was coming in just a little while. Jesus moved toward it with unswerving purpose.

3. The Old Testament prophets anticipated the time when, in the messianic age, the scattered children of Jerusalem would be gathered together (Isa. 60:4; Zech. 10: 6-10). Jesus was grieved because this beloved city, this beloved people would not be gathered and made one in the purposes of God. Instead, those purposes had been steadfastly and continuously rejected. Prophets were killed, messengers were stoned, and Jesus himself was soon to be crucified. It is God in Jesus who speaks the final word: “You will not see Me until you are ready to recognize the Messiah.” God is hidden from Israel until in repentance and faith the nation receives His Servant Messiah.

LUKE 14

At Dinner with the Pharisee

Luke 14:1-24

1 And it came to pass, as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath day, that they watched him.

2 And, behold, there was a certain man before him which had the dropsy.

3 And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day?

4 And they held their peace. And he took him, and healed him, and let him go;

5 And answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day?

6 And they could not answer him again to these things.

7 And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them, 8 When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him;

9 And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room.

10 But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee.

11 For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

12 Then said he also to him that bade him. When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee.

13 But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind:

14 And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

15 And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.

16 Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many:

17 And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready.

18 And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused.

19 And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused.

20 And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

21 So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.

22 And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.

23 And the lord said unto the servant. Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.

24 For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.

The dinner discourses in this section are part of the continuing debate between Jesus and the Pharisees. It was common practice to invite the visiting rabbi or other guests home for dinner after the synagogue service. The passage contains several themes recurring in Luke's Gospel. It is the fifth time that Luke records Jesus at the dinner table (5:29-32; 7:36-50; 10:38-42; 11:37). It is the fourth time we are told of a Sabbath observance conflict (6:1-5; 6:6-11; 13: 10) and the third Sabbath healing (6:6-11; 13:10). Again in this passage the kingdom of God, especially its triumph at the last time, is pictured as a great banquet.

On other occasions where Jesus was eating with Pharisees there was conflict and antagonism. This one was probably no exception. However, Jesus did not refuse the invitation, whatever the motive. He continually sought to penetrate the heart of Phariseeism and to open it up to the grace of God.

Jesus' dinner table teachings were especially helpful to leaders in the Early Church in the times when the Christian movement gathered in homes for worship, fellowship, and the Lord's Supper. His instructions on hospitality, courtesy, and humility furnished guidelines for the table fellowship of the growing Church.

1. The man with dropsy may have been “planted” to bait a trap for Jesus, but he probably was one of the crowd standing around watching the proceedings. The

symptom of dropsy is an excess of fluid in the body tissues. According to the rabbis it was caused by sexual sin. Luke makes a point of the contrast between the Pharisees and lawyers and the victim of dropsy. In spite of their religiousness they were hardhearted, jealous of place and status.

Jesus took the initiative and asked the question they could not, or would not, answer: *Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?* (v. 3). They all would have agreed that there were some things that countermanded the law's prohibitions, such as life-or-death emergency for an ox or an ass. Jesus' logic was the logic of "How much more!" If they would rescue an animal, how much more should they deliver a brother!

Strange that Sabbath healings did not make Jesus beloved, but feared and hated. It is frightening that concern for the external practices of religion can blind and harden people until they do not really see persons or feel their needs; until, in fact, their behavior becomes a total denial of their professed faith and morality.

2. As Jesus observed the polite and sedate scramble for seats of honor, His mind went back to an old proverb, *Do not put yourself forward in the king's presence or stand in the place of the great; for it is better to be told, "Come up here," than to be put lower in the presence of the prince* (Prov. 25:6-7, RSV). What Jesus said to them in the parable was nothing new. It was powerful because it was so open and so fitting. In the words of Earle Ellis, "He undresses their concealed and half-forgotten motives and lays them naked on the dinner table."

But there is more. Jesus was saying more than that pride is bad and humility is good. He was still working on the theme of the reversal of values necessary in the kingdom of God. His words exposed their pride and self-dependence and called them to repentance. In the triumphal day of God, the repentant, dependent, trusting ones will be exalted; the self-sufficient, proud ones will be debased.

It is the fundamental truth of the presence of the Kingdom and its reversal of our human value systems that calls us to courtesy and hospitality and humility in all our relationships. Jesus is not giving good advice that nice people ought to heed so that they can be nicer. The great reality is the saving rule of God under which men come by repentance and faith. It is the awareness of God's value structure in the Kingdom that causes us to relate to others with humility and graciousness. The best example is the attitude and behavior of Jesus himself.

3. The words of Jesus in verses 12-14 are not simple and easy words. They are, in fact, radical and revolutionary. They cut through our whole system of mutual

hospitality and lay bare the ego and prick at the heart of so much of it. We give to those who can give back, send cards to those who will send in return—or who sent last year. We invite those with whom we are congenial. Not always, just almost always.

Of course, Jesus is not saying that we should ignore our friends and snub the ones we want to like us. But His truth is plain. The danger of climbing the social ladder and working the dinner-party circuit is that it locks one into the social order of this world driven by insecurity, honeycombed with ego and status and pride. It is a false world; its values are distorted and, as emphasized by Jesus, limited to the transient boundaries of the present time.

On the other hand, Jesus frankly teaches that we will be rewarded: “Pay who cannot repay and you will be repaid.” Perhaps He knows that our talk of being kind and good for goodness' sake and showing love simply for love's sake is after all a little bit unrealistic in our fallen world. We are not so spiritually advanced that there are no secondary motives in us. Some of our motives are pure. Most of them are mixed. In effect, Jesus was saying to that dinner crowd, “You want prestige; you want best seats, places of honor. You want to be where your piety can be seen and so be influential. Well, here is how to get the really best seats at the banquet to end all banquets. Here is the way to get honor that is really honor! Reverse these false, petty, prideful value systems of yours. Open your hearts to God's reality and there are rewards more than you can dream!”

4. The closing discourse at the table was introduced by a pious beatitude from one who undoubtedly included himself in: *Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God* (v. 15). The saying makes the transition from the dinner in the Pharisee's home to the messianic banquet. The parable with which Jesus replied shattered the complacency of the situation. The Kingdom is not entered by mouthing beatitudes or platitudes in a spirit of religious sentiment. It is entered by immediate response.

It was customary in Jerusalem's upper society to give two invitations. The first invited the guest; the second announced that the banquet was ready. The servant in the parable went out to proclaim that all was in readiness. The flimsy excuses of the piece of ground, the yoke of oxen, the wife (vv. 18-20) all signify worldly involvements that are considered more important than the banquet. The invitation was scorned, the banquet disdained. The angry master sent the servant first to the poor and despised of the city, then to the riffraff outside the city gates. The aristocrats, having despised the banquet, watched with scorn, then with

mounting chagrin as the swelling crowd of unkempt, seedy ragtags filled the ornate banquet hall. Their laughter stilled, the door was shut.

God, through centuries of visitation, summoned Israel to the messianic banquet. In Jesus, the Servant, He proclaimed that the banquet was ready. Jesus was, in fact, in the very parable announcing the readiness of the banquet. But Israel rejected and the door was swung open to the outcasts and Gentiles. Both the joy of readiness and judgment on refusal permeate the passage.

Conditions of Discipleship

Luke 14:25-35

25 And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, 26 If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

27 And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?

29 Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, 30 Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.

31 Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?

32 Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace.

33 So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.

34 Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall It be seasoned?

35 It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

As the interrupted journey continues, the theme of the Kingdom and its demands persist in Jesus' teaching. The coming Cross looms large. The demands of discipleship given to the Twelve (9:18-27) and to the halfhearted followers (9:57-62) are extended now to the multitudes who accompany Jesus. His words constituted a warning to the crowds that His journey to Jerusalem was not a victory march. Discipleship demanded utter loyalty and willingness to pay the price. To do less was to become like unsalty salt, useless and discarded.

1. What Jesus demanded of His disciples (vv. 25-27) is precisely what was demanded of himself. He had made His own choice and placed the Kingdom above the ties of home and family (8:19-21). His own life and meaning and integrity were on the line. His obedience was leading Him to the Cross, and all lesser ties had to go.

The word *hate* as used by Jesus did not mean to His hearers what it means to us. A better phrase for Western ears would be “to love less than.” We are not

asked to hate family; we are called to give the kind of primary allegiance to the Kingdom that puts all other loyalties in second place.

Perhaps it is this very process—the deliberate, often painful subjection of all other relationships to Christ—that constitutes the cross. It, of course, means inner preparation for the possibility of martyrdom; but Luke's emphasis in 9: 23, and probably here as well, is “daily” bearing of the cross. Where loyalty to Christ and the Kingdom mean a death to our own desires, there is a cross, a kind of dying to be done. A daily cross-bearing for the disciple brings the meaning of the cross into the events and relationships of daily life. The cross is present when we are reproached for Jesus' sake, when we care and get hurt, when under pressure we witness. The daily bearing of the cross is the greatest protection and preparation for the great and crucial tests of our lives.

2. The call of Jesus demands a certain deliberateness and thoughtfulness as well as decisiveness. Those who follow Him must count the cost (vv. 28-33). The sayings about the unfinished tower and the unfought war were not meant to discourage effort or encourage disciples to be content with little. They were meant to awaken the halfhearted to the revolutionizing realities of discipleship. No one is swept into the Kingdom on the waves of sentiment. Jesus never did beg people or plead with them to follow Him. He often warned them of the price to pay and challenged them to full commitment.

3. Jesus' disciples are called to be salt in society to preserve and to season (vv. 34-35). The disciple, though in the kingdom of God, is still under the judgment of God. When the distinctive quality of committed discipleship is gone, all is gone. Salt has only one thing, its salinity. So with the disciple, he has nothing else to give, nothing else in which to trust but his radical obedience to Christ and the Kingdom. So John 15:5 records Jesus as saying: *Without me ye can do nothing.*

The Christian, weakened by indecision, adulterated with worldly affairs, diluted by compromise, can be no saving, preserving, zest-giving force in our world. The entire passage brings a sense of urgency to the matter of commitment. The alternatives are clear: discipleship or disuse.

LUKE 15

God's Joy in Repentance

Luke 15:1-32

- 1 Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him.
- 2 And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.
- 3 And he spake this parable unto them, saying, 4 What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?
- 5 And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.
- 6 And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.
- 7 I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.
- 8 Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lost one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it?
- 9 And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost.
- 10 Likewise, I say unto you there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.
- 11 And he said, A certain man had two sons:
- 12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.
- 13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.
- 14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.
- 15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.
- 16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him.
- 17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish With hunger!
- 18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, 19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants.
- 20 And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.
- 21 And the son said unto him. Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.
- 22 But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet;
- 23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:
- 24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.
- 25 Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing.
- 26 And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.
- 27 And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.
- 28 And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him.
- 29 And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with

my friends:

30 But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

31 And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.

32 It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

In the previous section Jesus stressed the necessity and the urgency of repentance. In this familiar and beautiful chapter the same theme is continued. In the three parables Jesus shows the meaning of repentance and the joy that the penitent, forgiven sinner brings to God—and ought also to bring to the Pharisees. The parables are introduced by the murmuring of the Pharisees and scribes against Jesus because of His attraction for the tax collectors and sinners. This is the third time in Luke's Gospel that Jesus is accused of degrading associations with outcasts. The first occasion was the banquet provided by Levi (Matthew) for his friends after he became a follower of Jesus (5:29-32). The second was the dinner at the house of Simon the Pharisee when the repentant woman washed His feet with her tears (7:36-50). A fourth time is described in 19:7 when Zacchaeus made public confession and restitution. In each of these situations the concern of the Pharisees was the former character of the “sinner” and not with the fact of repentance and discipleship. Jesus saw new repentance and obedience; they saw only the old, despised life-style.

Publicans were Jewish tax collectors who collected for the Romans from their own countrymen, and usually gained wealth for themselves by excessive overcharges. Sinners were the irreligious, those who by character or by work or by carelessness did not keep the law or observe the rituals and customs of orthodox Judaism. This group included tax collectors, donkey drivers, shepherds, tanners, peddlers, as well as harlots and the like. These kinds of people liked Jesus, and He liked them. His critics would keep holy by avoiding contamination. No self-respecting Jew would allow himself to get involved with persons of bad character. Both Jesus' actions in regard to sinners and His reply in the parables indicate His conviction that He is carrying out, in himself, the servant mission to which Israel was called in the Old Testament, the mission to the outcasts and the underprivileged, the needy peoples of the world. It is God's attitude that is being manifested in Jesus' action in receiving sinners. He is the embodiment of God's love reaching out to them; and in Him they are, in reality, being received into the Kingdom. The central, dominating thought is God's joy at the penitent response of sinners. God rejoices because He forgives; the lost is found, the wanderer has come home.

1. The first two are twin parables (vv. 3-10). Something valuable is lost, searched for, found, and rejoiced over. The common refrain is, *There is joy ... over one sinner that repenteth* (vv. 7, 10). The concern of the parable is not primarily the love of the shepherd for the flock or the search of the woman for the coin, but joy over the found sheep and the recovered coin, joy that desired to be shared. The scribes and Pharisees who considered themselves to have been in the fold and among the unlost ones should have joined the rejoicing of the shepherd and the woman that the lost was found. Like the elder brother in the next parable, they were self-centered and insolent, unable to share the joy of the father's heart.

2. With marvelous simplicity, Jesus gathered up and intimately personalized the truth of the previous parables. The story of the prodigal son is almost an allegory, for the younger son represents the tax collectors and sinners Jesus was accused of befriending, while the elder brother represents the scribes and Pharisees who jealously refused to rejoice or to welcome the returning son. The father exemplifies the goodness and grace, the boundless mercy and love of God, who receives sinners. His love not only reaches out to the lost, penitent one, but to the self-righteous Pharisees as well. As a matter of fact, the parable is a story of two lost brothers. One was away in the far country; the other was away while in the father's house. The elder brother was just as far removed in spirit from the father as the younger was in behavior. But he loved them both.

a. The younger brother's inheritance amounted to one-third of the estate. Since he demanded to have it immediately, he forfeited any gain that might have accrued until the father's death. The son emigrated to a far country, and having squandered his resources, hired out as a swine keeper. The picture Jesus paints is one of total degradation and humiliation. But he came to himself, realized that his enemy was himself, and began to think of home.

How accurately Jesus describes the thousands who have followed the footsteps of the prodigal! Some have turned away from the old ethics and moral standards of home; others have rejected the old teachings and gone to seek their intellectual fortunes in philosophies, atheism, other religions and life-styles. Like the prodigal, whether they know it or not, their resources have come from the Father and their relation to Him. When the source is cut off, the famine soon comes. No man has the resources in himself to fulfill himself. Apart from his relation to the Father he is soon bankrupt and degraded. Not all come to themselves in time and some on their wavering, hesitant journey home meet the elder brother before they meet the Father and the last state is worse than the first (11:26)! But some come home, like the prodigal, to find that the well-rehearsed

speech of penitence is interrupted with overflowing love. The robe of restored status, the ring of authority, the shoes of sonship—all the tokens of forgiveness and reinstatement are freely offered. The banquet is prepared because the lost son is found, the dead son is alive again.

b. The paragraph describing the reaction of the older brother is not an appendix tacked on. Rather, it is fundamental to the whole story, and the climax is the brother's anger and his father's words of rebuke. The father's words are, in fact, God's words to Israel. Through the years the older brother was in the father's house, full heir to all the inheritance, yet he had lost the joy of the family and the warmth of the fellowship. He was in the presence of blessings and resources far beyond his dreams, but there was no excitement, no life; just work and duty. The response of the prodigal to his father was, *I have sinned* (v. 21); the response of the older brother was, *I have served* (v. 29, RSV).

c. The issue of the parable is not only the relation of the older brother to his father, but to his brother. In his anger he separated himself, *This thy son* (v. 30). His father would not accept the isolation, *This thy brother* (v. 32). A. R. C. Leaney puts it beautifully, "With exquisite economy the point is made that the tax gatherers and sinners are brethren of those who murmur at Jesus for associating with them; this responsibility cannot be shelved by calling the sinner, 'This son of yours.'" In the end, the penitent son was in the banquet hall, the elder brother was outside.

3. Along with the theme of God's joy in repentance there are two deeply significant truths that reach out of the story into our own world. One is that God loves the sinner and forgives him on the basis of simple, honest repentance. It is Jesus himself who brings God's forgiveness to the penitent. The other is that Pharisees ought to respond to the salvation of sinners just as God does. That word is for Pharisees of all ages in all times of the Church. We are brothers to the lost, and need to be sensitive to the heartbeat of the Father in both love and joy!

LUKE 16

God and Mammon

Luke 16:1-13

1 And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.

2 And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.

3 Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed.

4 I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.

5 So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord?

6 And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty.

7 Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore.

8 And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.

9 And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.

10 He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.

11 If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?

12 And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?

13 No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Jesus addressed this parable to the disciples, but it appears that the Pharisees were still close by. It is filled with difficulties, not because the story itself is hard to understand, but because of the way it is used by Jesus. It appears, at first reading, as though a dishonest steward, facing dismissal, engaged in fraud to guarantee his future, was praised by his defrauded master and used by Jesus as an example to His followers. Further, it is difficult because four separate sayings are attached to the story, each with a distinct emphasis, yet all related to the use of money and the danger of it, in relation to eternal destiny, thus seeming to imply that one can buy heaven with unholy money. It will help to remember that the story is a parable and not an allegory. That is, there is one central thrust of the story and not all the characters have their counterparts in real life. Also, the atmosphere of the story is the atmosphere of crisis. The actions of the steward and the words of Jesus are to be understood in the context of impending judgment.

1. The parable tells the story of a steward in charge of the property of a wealthy landowner. His dishonesty was discovered and he was called to turn in his accounts and give up his stewardship. He shrewdly used the little time he had left to make sure that he would have friends to receive him when his job was

gone. Too soft for labor and too proud for charity, he called in his master's debtors and proceeded to write off a large percent of the debt of each man. The master, though defrauded, could not help congratulating the clever scoundrel for the way he handled the situation.

2. Some scholars say that the parable ends at verse 7 and that Jesus is the *lord* who *commended the unjust steward* and applied the parable to the disciples. One thing is very clear, Jesus did not commend the steward for his thievery but for his “savvy,” his decisive action in the face of the coming crisis. He acted to save his future. Suddenly the parable became a challenge. *The children of this world are ... wiser than the children of light* (v. 8). Jeremias in his book, *The Parables of Jesus*, gives this interpretation of Jesus' words to His disciples: “You should apply the lesson to yourselves. You are in the same position as this steward who saw imminent disaster threatening him with ruin, but the crisis ... in which ... you are already involved is incomparably more terrible. ... the challenge of the hour demands prudence, everything is at stake.”

3. The word *mammon* in verse 9 is used in a semipersonal sense to mean wealth or money. *Unrighteous mammon* (v. 9, RSV) probably does not mean money gained in an unlawful way; it means, rather, that it is part of this world and shares in the evil of this world and causes much of it. Disciples are to use it in such a way that it becomes a means of salvation instead of damnation.

It is almost certain that the exhortation to make friends with money means giving to the poor, so that when death comes they may intercede with God. Some scholars believe that the word *they* (v. 9) is a reverent term for God. If so, then it is He who receives the generous giver into eternal habitations. Barclay has a helpful sentence on this verse: “Material possessions should be used to cement the friendships that enhance the real and permanent values of life.”

4. Perhaps the sayings of verses 10-13 apply the parable to the poor disciples and their use of money, and also to make sure that the parable was understood. Jesus did not commend the steward's dishonesty but his prudence. Disciples are to be honest and faithful in their stewardship. Children of this world frankly serve mammon. They use the goods of this world for whatever they want, and wise ones exercise shrewd stewardship in order to achieve their goals of security. The children of God do not serve mammon. Their goals of security are not tied to this world, but they have and use mammon, and since the whole of life belongs to God, how they exercise their stewardship of mammon is a factor in the achievement of their goal of heavenly security. There is a note of warning here.

How disciples handle the stewardship of mammon reveals whether in their hearts they serve God or mammon.

Law and Gospel

Luke 16:14-18

14 And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him.

15 And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.

16 The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.

17 And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fall.

18 Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, commiteth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.

This passage is a collection of sayings about money, the Kingdom, the law, and divorce. Underneath them there is a common theme that has appeared in Luke before, namely, the theme of the reversal of our earthly values in the kingdom of God.

1. The Pharisees, lovers of money, heard Jesus talk to the disciples and literally turned up their noses at His declaration: *Ye cannot serve God and mammon* (v. 13). In their view, their righteousness had been blessed by God with prosperity and so was demonstrated to men. The scathing response of Jesus clearly shows the reversal theme. What is a thing of status in this world is an abomination in the next. “*God sees through you; for what sets itself up to be admired by men is detestable in the sight of God*” (v. 15, NEB). The push for human recognition is idolatry in the eyes of God.

2. In verse 16, Jesus makes reference to John Baptist, the climactic figure of the old covenant. The law and the prophets were the authoritative word until the time of John. He prepared the way and ushered in the kingdom of God, present in Jesus. In the Kingdom, all that the law and the prophets had spoken came to full realization. In the coming of Jesus, as Manson writes, “the gate of the Kingdom has been thrown open.” Those who see it for the good thing it really is are pressing their way with urgency and force into it. Demonic powers seek to frustrate the Kingdom. The Pharisees with their legalisms fight against it and seek to keep people out of it. But the Kingdom has come. The door is open and entrance is found by those who see its value and decisively act in repentance and faith.

3. But the new does not abrogate the old. The gospel does not abolish the law. The law, in fact, is only fulfilled in the gospel, which makes it possible in grace

for men to express the law's ultimate intention. An illustration of this is given in the saying about divorce in verse 18. The point of the saying is not that Jesus and the Kingdom drive a harder bargain than the old law. He was saying that in the Kingdom the higher intent of the law can be realized. The law recognized divorce because of the hardness of men's hearts. But God's design in the creation of two sexes was that man and woman live in lifelong partnership. This ideal is reachable in the Kingdom because in grace there is a cure for the hardness of heart that destroys the marriage relationship.

The Rich Man and Lazarus

Luke 16:19-31

19 There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and tared sumptuously every day:

20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, 21 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;

23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

27 Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house:

28 For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

We are so accustomed to reading this parable as a self-contained unit that we often miss its significant relationship to what Jesus said in the previous verses of the chapter. The parable could be an illustration in a negative way of the saying of verse 9, *“Make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal habitations”* (RSV). The rich man could have acted in such a way that Lazarus would have welcomed him into the joys of Abraham's bosom. Many scholars believe that the picture painted of the life-style of Dives (Latin for “rich man”) described a wealthy Sadducee in a rich Temple environment. If, however, the parable is an application of what

Jesus said about money and destiny in the previous verses, He could have been warning Pharisees as well.

The theme of the parable was familiar to Jesus' hearers. There was a well-known contemporary story from Egypt that told of the deaths of a rich man and a poor man and the reversal of their fortunes after death. No doubt this story carries through the "reversal of values" theme so often observed in Luke. It does more, however, than tell us that death often transposes human situations. Neither is its main purpose to describe, as one writer put it, "the temperature of hell and the furniture of heaven." Our Lord's primary purpose is to confront His hearers with the demands of the Word of God. Neither Dives' wealth nor his relation to Abraham were adequate for his salvation. His destiny was a moral one: his refusal to show the mercy and justice so clearly set forth in the law and the prophets.

There are three movements here. The first pictures the two men in life; the second, in death. The third pictures Dives asking for signs to be given to his brothers. The contrasts between Dives and Lazarus run all through the first and second sections; but in the third, Lazarus fades and the focus of attention is on Dives, his brothers, and the witness of the law and the prophets.

1. Dives dressed and ate like one living in a palace. Lazarus was crippled, had a skin disease, was a beggar nuzzled by the roving dogs. His description, according to popular Jewish thought, indicated that he was a sinner being punished by God. The conclusion of the story probably took most of the hearers by surprise.

2. The great leveler, the great reverser, is death. The honorable life of Dives carried right down to the honorable funeral. And then he went to hell. The miserable life of Lazarus carried right down to his miserable death. And then he went to heaven. Actually, not the final state of these two, but the intermediate state between death and final judgment is described. Lazarus was in Abraham's bosom, probably meaning that he was at the right hand of Abraham in the place of honor at the heavenly banquet of paradise. The reversal of his fortunes was complete. Dives found himself in Hades, and was in torment in this abode of the dead. Oddly enough, even here he is not repentant. Tormented, yes; humble, no. He still wants Lazarus for a servant and implies blame on Abraham for not letting him know sooner how awful his lot would be.

3. At this point the parable moves in a new direction. Lazarus is no longer involved. It appears that Jesus was in a deliberate way applying the profound

realities of the parable to his hearers. In effect Dives said: “Since the alternatives are so awesome and the issue so irrevocable, send some sign to my brothers. *If one went unto them from the dead, they will repent* (v. 30).” He asked for signs but the real signs were already there—the law, the prophets, and the presence of Jesus himself.

Jeremias says the parable could be called the parable of the six brothers. The five living ones, like their dead brother, were men of this world, living like the “Flood generation” described in 17:26-27, not hearing the thunder of the coming Flood. They were closed to the words of the law and the prophets, no thought about death and what comes after. And they would not hear though one be raised from the dead. Perhaps Luke was thinking as he wrote this parable that if the Jews had really believed their own Scriptures they would have received Christ and the Resurrection. It is still true that signs do not produce faith. Another Lazarus was raised (John 11) and Jesus was raised! Yet many did not believe. In Manson's words: “The reality of the afterlife depends on the clear recognition by conscience of the ethical demands made by the law and the prophets. Not signs, obedience determines destiny.”

LUKE 17

The Servant's Task

Luke 17:1-10

- 1 Then said he unto the disciples. It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come!
- 2 It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.
- 3 Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.
- 4 And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent: thou shalt forgive him.
- 5 And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.
- 6 And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.
- 7 But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat?
- 8 And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink?
- 9 Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not.
- 10 So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.

The sayings of this section are part of the teaching ministry of Jesus to the disciples, anticipating the time when He is gone and they are in places of leadership in the Church. Luke, at the time of writing, was himself part of that Church and undoubtedly knew firsthand some of the situations Jesus anticipated. Jesus spoke of offenses and stumbling blocks, the need for continuing forgiveness in the Church, and the need and adequacy of faith. No merit is acquired by the disciple as he fulfills his leadership role as servant.

1. It is inevitable that weak believers will on occasion be hurt. But Jesus took no careless, “Oh, well” attitude toward it. Especially in view of the disciples' coming leadership role, they were to accept deeply their responsibility toward others and be careful not to cause the weak Christian to fall away. No mention is made of what or how offenses come; however, in chapter 9 Jesus rebuked the disciples for their dispute about greatness (vv. 46-47), and for their intolerance (vv. 49-50). The sayings of chapter 12 reveal negligence (vv. 36-37) and abusiveness (vv. 45-46). Whatever the cause of offense, the issue was serious with Jesus, and the weak brother is to be affirmed and strengthened.

2. The desire not to offend does not take the form of toleration and approval of all behavior. The sinning brother is to be rebuked, but in a spirit of forgiveness. The dynamic elements in the personal relationships of Christian fellowship are continuing repentance and forgiveness. Jesus placed high value on the weak brother and took pains to teach His disciples the kinds of attitudes to maintain for the preservation of the fellowship of the Kingdom. Genuine repentance is to be met with genuine forgiveness, time after time after time.

3. The immediate response of the disciples when faced with the obviously impossible task of such forgiveness was: *Lord, increase our faith* (v. 5). Sevenfold forgiveness means unlimited, uncounted forgiveness, and it is beyond the reach of human ability. It demands faith that is the gift of God. Yet even small faith can accomplish great things. By the purposely exaggerated illustration of the sycamine tree, transplanted in the sea by “mustard seed” faith, Jesus rejected the idea of big and little faith. These measures do not apply. Real faith, however small, brings to bear the real power of God upon any needful situation. The disciples, then, must not be overcome by the demand to forgive. They must obey, knowing that all things are possible to him who believes (Mark 9:23).

4. In all this there is no room for self-righteousness. The parable Jesus told of the servant (vv. 7-10) instructed them that their work as disciples-apostles in the

coming times—i.e., the strengthening of the weaker ones, the life of forgiveness and faith—is all part of the servant mission. They were to do their tasks, not with the master complex, but with the kind of service and humility fitting a slave. Disciples cannot be servants and act like masters. There is no way to acquire merit or build up credit or put God under obligation.

The Healing of the Lepers

Luke 17:11-19

11 And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.

12 And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off:

13 And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

14 And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.

15 And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, 16 And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.

17 And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?

18 There are not found that returned to give glory to God save this stranger.

19 And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.

It is very much like Luke to record this miracle. The emphasis is on the gratitude of the Samaritan, who stands for the Gentile world which Jesus came to save. It is a teaching miracle and the emphasis is not so much on the miraculous act as upon the teaching that arises out of it. Jesus, the Healer, gives mercy to all who call on Him, whether Jews or not. The miracle story reflects the non-gratitude of the Jews for the blessings of Jesus' ministry, and the grateful acceptance and gratitude of non-Jews. It is prophetic of later Jewish rejection and the Gentile mission of the young Church as recorded in Acts.

1. The nine Jews and one Samaritan were one in their tragedy and suffering, even though in society they never mixed. Jesus sent them all to Jerusalem to show themselves to the priest (the health officer) and then to return to society again. As they went, they were all healed. Suddenly, their oneness was broken; the Samaritan returned to give thanks to Jesus. Jesus said, *Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole* (v. 19). Grateful acceptance of the gift of healing grace led the Samaritan into a personal wholeness beyond mere physical health. Like the Jews, the nine had the benefits of the Messiah's healing presence, but no saving relationship.

2. As Canon Mosely has written, the moment a man gets what he wants is a testing moment. It carries a trial and a probation with it. So it was with the 10

lepers. The time of healing was a dividing time, a decision time. The Samaritan returned to give glory to God, thus humbling himself and opening himself to God's grace in Jesus. The 9, for reasons unknown to us, took their healing and never looked back or gave thanks.

The miracle story reveals the healing presence of Messiah, exercising the power and authority of the Kingdom in the healing of disease. His presence, however, calls for response, for decision, for commitment. The nine, like the rich farmer and the unjust steward, took their benefits where they could get them and went their way as the sons of this age. The Samaritan, in gratitude and humility, found wholeness as a child of the Kingdom.

The Kingdom Come and the Coming Kingdom

Luke 17:20-37

20 And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation:

21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

22 And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it.

23 And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after them, nor follow them.

24 For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day.

25 But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.

26 And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.

27 They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.

28 Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded;

29 But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.

30 Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

31 In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back.

32 Remember Lot's wife.

33 Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.

34 I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left.

35 Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

36 Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

37 And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.

The question by the Pharisees about the coming of the Kingdom became the occasion for Jesus to teach them, and especially the disciples, about both the present reality of the Kingdom in himself, known only to the eyes of faith, and

the future open manifestation of the Kingdom. First, He must die. Then comes the period of waiting and working. Finally, He will come again in glory. The sudden, unheralded, but universally manifested return of the triumphant Son of Man will come as judgment to the unbeliever and triumph to the follower of Messiah. In this passage “the inexorableness of the moral issues of life could not be more vividly expressed” (Manson).

1. Still seeking for signs, the Pharisees asked about the coming of the kingdom of God. Jesus taught, in reply, that the reign of God was not something coming with external manifestations; rather it was present, among them, yes, upon them in Jesus himself. His words *within you* (v. 21) do not imply that the kingdom of God was some spirit of goodwill in the hearts of the Pharisees. He rather declared that *in himself* the reign of God had come and was manifesting itself in their own generation.

2. There is another aspect of the Kingdom which Jesus elaborated to His disciples. There will be, in the future, a glorious visible manifestation of the Kingdom, the day of triumph of the Son of Man. In the interim of waiting for the day of triumph, the disciples will be filled with longing for its appearance and will be tempted to follow this lead and that, be sidetracked by this strange thing or that. But they are not to follow those who would lead them astray. The coming of the Son of Man will be like lightning reaching from one end of heaven to the other—no mistaking it. But first comes the suffering and death of the Servant Messiah.

3. Two other illustrations are given to describe the situation at the second coming of the triumphant Son of Man. Times will be like they were before the Flood. People were eating and drinking and marrying—life was going on as usual until the Flood came and destroyed them. Times will be like they were when Lot lived in Sodom before its destruction. People went their way, eating, working, building as though they had forever, unheeding to the Word of God, unmindful of His coming judgment; as Jeremias puts it, “feasting and dancing—on a volcano.” On the day Lot went out, fire and brimstone consumed the city.

The coming of the Lord in triumph, then, will be universal and it will be sudden. For those who reject the Kingdom and spurn the Messiah and refuse to accept His grace, it will be a time of terrible catastrophe.

4. Verses 31-33 speak of the kind of readiness and anticipation the disciples are to have as they live in the interim. The words appear to be a prophetic picture of

the situation that actually took place when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70. The kind of crisis the city faced when the invaders entered it is the one that will be faced at the coming of the Son of Man; no looking back, no time for preparation.

5. The sudden manifestation of the Kingdom on that day will bring separation. In this whole passage the awesome implications of the powerful presence of the Kingdom are vividly pictured. The Kingdom demands the decision of response, and the manifestation of the Kingdom reveals the choices; separating, dividing even those with the closest of human ties.

6. Jesus had said, "Not here, not there." The natural response was, "Where then?" Jesus answered with a common proverb of the day, *Where the corpse is, there the vultures will gather* (v. 37, NEB). His meaning seems to be, Wherever sin is, there is judgment. In God's time and upon all sin, God's judgment will fall.

LUKE 18

Prayer and the Kingdom

Luke 18:1-14

- 1 And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;
- 2 Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man:
- 3 And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.
- 4 And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man;
- 5 Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.
- 6 And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.
- 7 And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?
- 8 I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?
- 9 And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:
- 10 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.
- 11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.
- 12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.
- 13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.
- 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

The parables of this section are related to the preceding one in which Jesus spoke to the Pharisees about the presence of the Kingdom in their midst and to His disciples about the certainty of the consummation of the Kingdom in His own second coming. He described the interim as a time of testing and stress and division, such as would cause the disciples to long for the fulfillment of His promised coming.

The parable of the unjust judge speaks with promise to those who *cry day and night* (v. 7) for vindication to God. The parable of the Pharisee and publican deals with the condition of a man's vindication by God.

1. Knowing that they would be living in the testing time before the Second Coming, Jesus gave a parable to teach them to keep strong through prayer and to keep faith. A judge's task was not only to administer fair dealings but also to take the cause of the widow and the fatherless and the oppressed who could not help themselves. The judge of the parable *feared not God, neither regarded man* (v. 2). The poor widow could not bribe him. She had only one resource: persistence. Day after day she came until the judge, for no other reason than that her obstinacy was about to break him completely, took up her cause and vindicated her. Jesus immediately transferred the situation to God and His vindication of His people. The point is: If the judge would do this for the widow, how much more will God vindicate His people!

For the Later Church, the interim before the Second Coming was not just a problem of chronology; it was a problem of life and survival. When times are good, waiting is no problem. Delay in the lions' den is another matter. When time goes by and persecution goes on and the Lord does not come to deliver, then discouragement and despair can set in and breed apostasy. Therefore the promise of Jesus is given: *Will not God hasten to the rescue of his elect who cry to him day and night, even if he puts their patience to the test?* (v. 7, translation by Jeremias). Jesus preached with unwavering confidence that God's kingdom, His reign, had come in himself and that the time of ultimate triumph was inevitably coming. The final victory was implicit in the beginning. God is carrying on His work and will bring it to completion. Jesus held this assurance to the end. Nothing made Him waver. His followers must have the same confident trust. They must, despite all outward appearances, take God into account, take Him at His word, take Him seriously. He will bring to completion the saving work He has begun (cf. Phil. 1:6). The ultimate issue for the disciple is one of persistence, not only in prayer, but in faith. *When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?* (v. 8).

2. The conclusion of the parable of the Pharisee and publican must have come as a shock to Jesus' listeners. The pattern of the Pharisee's prayer was not uncommon. Everything was normal. The tax collector, miserable wretch, could only beat his heart and cry, *God be merciful to me a sinner* (v. 13). Two men went to pray but only one prayed to God; the other paraded his virtues to God. The tax collector went home *justified*. Nothing is said of how the tax collector worked out his new relationship with God in his life. But something very definite is said about how God accepts people. It is not on the basis of their goodness, their merits, their disciplines, or their rituals. He is the God described in Psalm 51, who will not despise *a broken and a contrite heart* (v. 17). He accepts the penitent, the repentant, who, having nothing to offer, throw themselves on His mercy, and trust their lives to Him. These are the ones He vindicates!

Qualifications for the Kingdom

Luke 18:15-34

15 And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them.

16 But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.

17 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.

18 And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

19 And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God.

20 Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery. Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother.

21 And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up.

22 Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.

23 And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich.

24 And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!

25 For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

26 And they that heard it said, Who then can be saved?

27 And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.

28 Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee.

29 And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, 30 Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.

31 Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished.

32 For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and

spitted on:

33 And they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again.

34 And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.

The basic question of this passage is, How does one enter the Kingdom? In the previous paragraph the Pharisee wanted to earn it, as does the rich young ruler of verses 18-27. In between these two is the child, the symbol of the only way into the Kingdom. The Kingdom is received as children received Jesus and as Jesus received them, openly, trustingly, personally.

The passage was with the third “prediction of the Passion,” which answers the question, finally, about entrance to the Kingdom. It is by the miracle of grace provided through the death of Christ.

1. Why should disciples reject the parents bringing their children to Jesus? Perhaps they wanted to spare Him the intrusion, to protect Him from the added strain or save Him from such trivial matters when His mind was really on the Kingdom. Jesus reversed their understanding and rebuked their attitude, declaring in fact that the Kingdom is received like a little child—or not at all.

Is there some childlike trait that every man must find for himself (Jesus did not describe it) and develop before he can enter the Kingdom? This would be only another and more refined works-righteousness or merit system. It is rather that a man must receive the Kingdom as a child would receive it. He must become like a child again by releasing the false, ego-preserving accumulations of adulthood and by returning again to simple, humble trust. When defined in this manner, receiving the Kingdom as a child is very close to what the New Testament means by faith. The opposite of the childlike spirit is the spirit of the proud Pharisee (vv. 9-12).

2. The story of the rich young ruler (Matthew calls him *young*, 19:22; Mark says Jesus *loved him*, 10:21) teaches that the simple, humble trust of the Kingdom child leads inevitably to the full commitment of discipleship. The story is one of vivid contrast. A wealthy aristocrat sought out a poor traveling Teacher. He asked the question about eternal life of One who was on His way to die.

The greeting, *Good Master* (v. 18), was met with a question intended to probe the motives, “Goodness has its source in God. Are you saying that My goodness comes from God?” Then Jesus referred him, as He had referred the lawyer in 10:25 ff., back to the precepts of the law. The young man openly responded. *All these have I kept from my youth up* (v. 21). He had been meticulous in his keeping of the law, but he had not found any assurance of eternal life. Jesus

probed the depths of his heart life and uncovered the secret, final loyalty: his love of his riches. Jesus called him to discipleship and he turned away in sadness. *Ye cannot serve God and mammon* (16:13).

3. Jesus turned and twice reminded His disciples that it is hard for one who trusts in riches to enter the Kingdom. *Who then can be saved?* In common belief, to be rich implied special blessing from God. As He had so often done before, Jesus reversed their common earthly values. From a human point of view it is certainly impossible for a rich man to be saved; and, in fact, for anyone to be saved. But the Kingdom is not gained by human efforts. Who can be saved? No one, except by the grace of God. In contrast to the ruler, the disciples had left everything to follow Jesus, only to find true riches in this life and in the next.

4. And Jesus himself had left all for the sake of the Kingdom. In this third “prediction of the Passion” (vv. 31-34) Jesus revealed that His servant mission, accomplished through death, was in accordance with the will of His Father revealed in the Scriptures. The saying climaxes the teachings of this section on the question, Who enters the Kingdom? It is the childlike one, who trusts only and totally in the grace of God revealed in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The disciples did not understand the prediction of Jesus. In the words of G. B. Caird, “The crucifixion was the miracle of grace by which God made it possible for men to enter the Kingdom, breaking through their self-sufficiency with a demonstration of his all-sufficient love; but the event itself had to happen before they could understand the predictions of it.”

The Messiah Approaches Jerusalem

Luke 18:35-43

35 And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging:

36 And hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant.

37 And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.

38 And he cried, saying, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me.

39 And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried so much the more, Thou son of David, have mercy on me.

40 And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him: and when he was come near, he asked him, 41 Saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight.

42 And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee.

43 And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.

Jesus and His companions are finally approaching Jerusalem, moving to the close of the journey that began back in 9:51. This story and the related one about Zacchaeus (19:1-10) take place around Jericho, the last stop before entering the city. The healing miracle is a messianic one. The prophecies of Isaiah tell of the blessings that will come when the messianic King of David's line is restored to the throne in Israel (11:1; 35:5; 61:1). One of the marks of that new day is the opening of blind eyes. Bartimaeus, as he is called in Mark (10:46), recognized Jesus as the Son of David, was restored by the Messiah, and followed Him. The threefold aspect of the miracle illustrates vividly the great themes of preaching in the Early Church: the messiahship of Jesus, the salvation He offers, and the call to discipleship.

1. In contrast to the rich young ruler, Bartimaeus allowed nothing to deter him from receiving the answer to his openly confessed need. His cry was, *Jesus, thou son of David* (v. 38). There are only a few places in the Gospels in which the term “Son of David” appears (cf. Matt. 9:27; Mark 10:47). It has prophetic significance. Evidently there was a growing public conviction that Jesus was more than just a prophet. Earlier in His ministry at the Great Confession (9:18-27), the names given Him by the crowds were John the Baptist, Elijah, or one of the prophets. Here the messianic title “Son of David” is used and not rejected by Jesus. Only a short time later the crowds will shout the term again as He rides into Jerusalem (Matt. 21:9; Mark 11:10). There is no stopping the rising tide of recognition. It is as Messiah that Jesus opens the blind eyes, enters Jerusalem, cleanses the Temple, institutes the covenantal supper, and dies a sacrificial death.
2. Bartimaeus' opened eyes saw clearly the Messiah of whom, before, he had only heard. And he followed as a disciple. In him the power of death and darkness were broken by the power of the Messiah.

LUKE 19

Messiah Brings Salvation

Luke 19:1-10

1 And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho.

2 And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.

3 And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature.

4 And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycomore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way.

5 And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house.
 6 And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.
 7 And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.
 8 And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.
 9 And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham.
 10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

This story is closely related to the previous narrative of the healing of the blind man (18:35-43). Implicitly there and explicitly here Jesus is revealed as the Messiah, the Bringer of salvation. The moment of his encounter with Jesus, Zacchaeus finds salvation: the forgiveness of sins, restoration to the covenant community, and anticipation of the heavenly banquet in the kingdom of God. The whole event is a kind of miniature of the mission of Jesus. Zacchaeus, the rich publican, outcast of Israel, embodies the repentant, restitutional attitude demanded by John the Baptist and rejected by orthodox Judaism. He represents the *lost* that the shepherd *Son of man came to seek and to save* (v. 10).

1. Perhaps the rich tax collector had heard of the conversion of Levi (5:27-32), or rumors of the Teacher who welcomed sinners. At any rate, he was determined, like blind Bartimaeus, to see Jesus. The urgency in him was matched by the urgency of Jesus to meet him. The response of the crowd was the same it had been at other times. *They all murmured, saying, that he has gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner* (v. 7).

2. How hard for a rich man to enter the Kingdom (18:24)! Yet, *what is impossible with men is possible with God* (18: 27, RSV), and was demonstrated in the case of Zacchaeus. He had been openly serving mammon, but, unlike the rich young ruler (18:23), there was total renunciation (16:13). He assigned half his goods to charity and made fourfold restitution—which was more than required by the Old Testament law (Exod. 22:1; Lev. 6:5; Num. 5:6-7).

3. The heart of the episode is the word of Jesus, *This day is salvation come to this house* (v. 9). The repentant response of Zacchaeus to Jesus brought salvation and made him a true son of Abraham, not by natural descent or religious descent through the law, but by spiritual descent—a true son of Abraham and an heir of the promise. Sharing dinner with Jesus, the Messiah, he became a symbol of all those repentant, believing ones who *will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven* (Matt. 8:11, RSV).

The Kingdom and the Rejected King

Luke 19:11-27

11 And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.

12 He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.

13 And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

14 But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.

15 And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.

16 Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.

17 And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.

18 And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds.

19 And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities.

20 And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin:

21 For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow.

22 And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow:

23 Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?

24 And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds.

25 (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.)

26 For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him.

27 But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.

This parable has much in common with the parable of the talents in Matt. 25:14-30. Three themes occur in the parable as Luke gives it. The first is the delay of the triumph of the Kingdom; the second is the attitude and task of the disciples in the interim; and the third is the judgment that the rejected King exercises both upon fearful, faithless disciples and His enemies.

The disciples, like other Jews, believed that the Kingdom would be an earthly one and that it would begin in Jerusalem. They expected that the prophecies concerning the Kingdom would be fulfilled when the journey of Jesus ended in Jerusalem. Their anticipation increased as they approached the city. In this parable Jesus instructed them that He was not going to Jerusalem to exercise kingly power, but rather to fulfill the servant role of vicarious, redemptive

suffering and death, which alone make possible the return in kingly power. His coming again from the far country would be the time for the exercise of His judgment and triumph. In the meantime, His disciples are to busy themselves and be fruitful in the work of God. At His return in glory and power, judgment will fall upon the fearful, slothful servants as well as upon the enemies of the King. There was coming, indeed, a crisis in Jerusalem, but it was the crisis of His own death, which would involve, not fame, but persecution for His followers; and Jerusalem, far from being the scene of victory, would face judgment. Following an indefinite delay, the final crisis would be sudden and triumphant for the Son of Man.

1. When Herod the Great died in 4 B.C., appointment from Caesar Augustus as king of Judea. Fifty Jews also went to Rome to oppose it. Perhaps this or some similar historic event was in Jesus' mind as He told the story. The nobleman went to receive a *kingdom* (v. 12). Actually, he went to receive kingly power or authority. This use of the word helps us understand the meaning of the word *kingdom* as Jesus used it in the phrase *kingdom of God*. The kingdom of God is the kingly power of God, exercised in Jesus. As in the case of the parable, His power is exercised in a hostile environment and there are enemies. God's rule begins to break through the alien powers in the coming of Jesus, and will be ultimately victorious when He comes again.

2. In the interim the disciples are given the equivalent of about \$20.00 each and told to *occupy* (v. 13); that is, "*Trade with these till I come*" (RSV). They are not to speculate on the return but to be busy. The time before the return is not a time of meandering but a course to pursue (Heb. 12:1-2), a task to be accomplished. At the return not only the enemies will face judgment, but the slothful, fearful servant as well. Perhaps the servant who kept the pound represents the Jews, who, having been chosen for service, interpreted this choice as one for privilege, turned in upon themselves to keep themselves pure, and never became a servant, missionary people. Like the servant, they said, *I have kept ...* (v. 20), but in fact they did not keep, they lost. *Unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him* (v. 26).

The Closing Days

Luke 19:28—24:53

The King Enters Jerusalem

Luke 19:28-48

28 And when he had thus spoken he went before, ascending up to Jerusalem.

29 And it came to pass, when he was come nigh to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount called the mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, 30 Saying, Go ye into the village over against you; in the which at your entering ye shall find a colt tied, whereon yet never man sat: loose him, and bring him hither.

31 And if any man ask you. Why do ye loose him? thus shall ye say unto him, Because the Lord hath need of him.

32 And they that were sent went their way, and found even as he had said unto them.

33 And as they were loosing the colt, the owners thereof said unto them. Why loose ye the colt?

34 And they said, The Lord hath need of him.

35 And they brought him to Jesus: and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon.

36 And as he went, they spread their clothes in the way.

37 And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen;

38 Saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.

39 And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples.

40 And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.

41 And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, 42 Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

43 For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, 44 And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.

45 And he went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought;

46 Saying unto them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves.

47 And he taught daily in the temple. But the chief priests and the scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy him, 48 And could not find what they might do: for all the people were very attentive to hear him.

The long journey of the traveling Teacher comes to a close. He has been rejected in Nazareth in Galilee (4:28-30), in Samaria (9:53), and here in

Jerusalem. He is not Messiah triumphant in any normal human understanding of that word. He is Messiah rejected, and Jerusalem therefore stands under judgment.

It was characteristic of the prophets to not only speak parables, but to act them out as well. Ezekiel conducted a siege of Jerusalem in miniature with toy engines of war (Ezek. 4:1-3). Jeremiah wore a yoke in public to indicate the coming supremacy of Babylon over Judah (Jer. 27:2). These acts have been called acts of prophetic symbolism. The prophet not only illustrated the event, but became himself part of the event. In the last week of Jesus' ministry He performed three acts that are best interpreted as acts of prophetic or messianic symbolism. They are the entry into Jerusalem, the cleansing of the Temple, and the Last Supper. The first two are included in the present passage.

In these acts, Jesus not so much proclaimed His messiahship as He interpreted it to those who could understand. His actions revealed a Messiah who ruled with peace and conquered by a cross. In the case of the Triumphal Entry, the disciples understood, somewhat (vv. 37 f.), and His enemies certainly had some awareness of the significance of the event (v. 39); but probably the crowds and the Roman officials were only caught up in the emotion and the fervor.

1. Jesus rode the last two miles into the Holy City on a colt borrowed from a friend in the neighborhood. It is clear that He deliberately planned His entry to coincide with the approach of the throngs to Jerusalem at the Passover time. Emotion was high. Driven by a kind of divine compulsion, the disciples and pilgrims began to chant the Hallel Psalms (Psalms 113—118), which were used at the great Jewish festivals of Passover, Tabernacles, Pentecost, and Hanukkah. In the midst of this joyful sound, Jesus entered the city riding on a young donkey. Gradually He became the focal point of the chanting and shouting. The people took their clothes and spread them in His path. *The whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen* (v. 37). Their praise was an echo of the song of the angels at the birth of Jesus.

Matthew helps us understand the meaning of this deliberate and symbolic act of Jesus (Matt. 21:4-5). The prophet Zechariah had claimed that when Messiah came to the Holy City He would not come as a military conqueror, riding on a white horse, but as the Prince of Peace, *lowly, and riding upon an ass* (Zech. 9:9). In this acted parable, Jesus interpreted His messiahship. He was the Prince of Peace, who came to bring the peace of God to the troubled hearts of men. They hailed Him as a King, but did not really understand the meaning of that

lowly entry amid the praise. The Messiah of peace rules with the authority of suffering love and lowly servanthood.

The Pharisees saw some threatening implications in Jesus' entry amid the tumult: *Master, rebuke thy disciples*. His reply was probably a quotation from Hab. 2:11, where Israel was judged for unrebuked and unrepented-of evil. Jesus' messiahship, the real nature of His person and mission, had been hidden long enough. The hour had come for revelation. If the disciples and the people did not shout it out, the very stones would break forth to declare it.

2. It was not an hour of triumph for Jesus. When they came around the Mount of Olives and saw the shining eastern wall of the city and the Temple, the crowd burst into praise. Unnoticed in the tumult, Jesus wept; wept bitter tears of love and agony. The Holy City had been visited by God, through prophet and priest, miracle and teaching, deliverance and judgment. Again and again God's word had come to save, but the city would not hear, would not respond and obey. Finally, *when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son* (Gal. 4:4). It was Jerusalem's supreme and last opportunity. Only 40 years later the prophecies of Jesus literally came true. The Romans destroyed both city and Temple, leaving not *one stone upon another* (v. 44). Her cup of iniquity was full and judgment was sure.

3. The second act of prophetic symbolism was the cleansing of the Temple. The Temple was essentially a walled-in square consisting of a number of open-air courts centering on the Temple proper, in which was the holy of holies. Surrounding the Temple were the various courts assigned to the priesthood, the laity, and the women of Israel. The outermost one was the Court of the Gentiles. This one had been turned into an open-air market where pilgrims' money was exchanged and sacrifices were bought. As someone has descriptively written, "He found all the sweltering of a dirty cattle market and the haggling of a dirtier exchange of money."

To His cleansing action He added the words of the old prophets, *My house is the house of prayer* (Isa. 56:7), *but ye have made it a den of thieves* (Jer. 7:11). This, too, was a symbolic act. It is certain that Jesus' action made no lasting change in Temple behavior. Jesus knew "that the traders would be back tomorrow—a little more wary, and a little worse because they were aware" (W. R. Maltby in *Christ and His Cross*).

If the clue to the understanding of the entry is to be found in Zechariah, the key to the meaning of the cleansing is to be found in Mal. 3:1-3:

Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom

ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.

But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap:

And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.

It was a belief within Judaism that the Temple would be renewed or glorified when Messiah came. The cleansing, like the entry, was a symbol of Messiah coming in power to restore the purity of worship and bring men back to God, not through external means but through himself.

LUKE 20

Temple Conflicts: The Question of Authority

Luke 20:1-8

1 And it came to pass, that on one of those days, as he taught the people in the temple, and preached the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes came upon him with the elders, 2 And spake unto him, saying, Tell us, by what authority doest thou these things? or who is he that gave thee this authority?

3 And he answered and said unto them, I will also ask you one thing, and answer me:

4 The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men?

5 And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then believed ye him not?

6 But and if we say, Of men; all the people will stone us: for they be persuaded that John was a prophet.

7 And they answered, that they could not tell whence it was.

8 And Jesus said unto them. Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.

Jesus exercised messianic authority in the place of highest authority in Judaism, the Temple. In doing this He in fact displaced the authority of old Judaism and declared the time of both judgment and renewal to be at hand. His threat and challenge to the status quo could not be ignored. Jesus was approached by chief priests, scribes, and elders, a high-level committee representing the full spread of official Judaism: *Tell us, by what authority doest thou these things?* (v. 2).

Their question is fundamental, and like some ecclesiastics, they did not know how to handle authority that did not come through authorized channels! Jesus exercised authority of a different kind; and the question is valid, What kind of authority does Jesus have? Is it, finally, that unique combination of wisdom and personality and timing? Is it His unique and special charisma plus the sociological and religious factors present in His day? Was He spawned by the

times? Or does He in fact speak with the authority of God? It makes the ultimate difference whether Jesus speaks and acts in human authority or divine authority.

1. Jesus was aware of the motives behind the question: to entrap Him. If He claimed publicly His messiahship, He could be charged with blasphemy and perhaps sedition against the Roman Government. If He denied it, He would be discredited before the people. Like a good rabbi, He answered their question with a question, *The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men?* (v. 4). Jesus referred to John because the baptism he administered pointed to Jesus and prepared the way for Jesus. John witnessed to the divine nature of Jesus' ministry. If they acknowledged that John was from God, then they would have to acknowledge that Jesus was from God.

2. The tragedy of the whole episode is that they could not answer. They were not able to respond honestly because of fear of the people. If they said yes, they would have to come to terms with Jesus. If they said no, they would be discredited by the people, who believed that John was a prophet. They could not deny John; they could not affirm Jesus! Ultimate issues were at stake. The authority and power of God were called into question, but they could not answer. The real thing with them was not truth or error, right or wrong, God or man; it was safe or unsafe, expedient or inexpedient. The problem was not intellectual; it was moral. They could not face truth because it would endanger their safe position and standing before men. Jesus calls us to face the truth. If He speaks with the authority of God, we have only one alternative: bow before His sovereignty and follow Him.

Temple Conflicts: The Vineyard of Israel

Luke 20:9-18

9 Then began he to speak to the people this parable; A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it forth to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time.

10 And at the season he sent a servant to the husbandmen, that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard: but the husbandmen beat him, and sent him away empty.

11 And again he sent another servant: and they beat him also, and entreated him shamefully, and sent him away empty.

12 And again he sent a third: and they wounded him also, and cast him out.

13 Then said the lord of the vineyard, What shall I do? I will send my beloved son: it may be they will reverence him when they see him.

14 But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours.

15 So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him. What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them?

16 He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others. And when

they heard it, they said, God forbid.

17 And he beheld them, and said, What is this then that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner?

18 Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

Jesus could not openly claim messiahship, partly because His understanding of it did not fit popular expectations and partly because it would cause premature conflict with Jewish leaders and so with the Roman Government. He declared His messiahship, then, in a veiled way, open to those who had eyes to see and ears to hear, but closed to those who were not ready or who rejected Him. In this allegory-parable He presented the meaning of His mission as the Son of God, and God's judgment upon Israel for rejecting it.

Palestine was an occupied country and there were many large areas owned by foreigners who leased them out to local tenants. The picture Jesus painted in the parable was not overdrawn and was instantly understood. Economic depression and rising nationalism produced bitterness and hatred toward wealthy absentee landlords. The parable would remind some of Jesus' listeners of the parable in Isa. 5:1-7 in which Israel was compared to a vineyard that did not produce the expected crop.

1. If Israel is the vineyard, then the servants sent to the husbandmen represent the prophets and messengers sent to the leaders of Israel. In the lament over Jerusalem (13:34-35) Jesus expressed the mood of this parable: *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you!* (RSV). The landlord finally sent his *beloved son* (v. 13). Whatever the listeners understood by this, no doubt both Jesus and the Early Church understood it as a reference to the coming and rejection of the Messiah. The Son is not on the level with the servants. He bears unique relationship to the Father, and so He bears unique relationship to the tenants. Their response to Him is crucial.

2. The rejection of the Son brings judgment. By this parable Jesus said to them, "You leaders of Israel, you keepers of the vineyard, you have rejected, you have rebelled against those who have been sent to you. You think to eliminate the Son and so control all for yourselves. You have lost everything. God will bring judgment upon you and give His vineyard to others."

The reference to the rejected stone that becomes the cornerstone that is also the stumbling stone (Ps. 118:22-23; Isa. 8:14-15; 1 Pet. 2:4-8) expresses the same theme. Rejection of Jesus the Messiah means judgment. Jesus is the Cornerstone in the new temple. The house of official Judaism is desolate.

Temple Conflicts: God and Caesar

Luke 20:19-26

19 And the chief priests and the scribes the same hour sought to lay hands on him; and they feared the people: for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them.

20 And they watched him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor.

21 And they asked him, saying, Master, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest thou the person of any, but teachest the way of God truly:

22 Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar, or no?

23 But he perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, Why tempt ye me?

24 Shew me a penny. Whose image and superscription hath it? They answered and said, Caesar's.

25 And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's.

26 And they could not take hold of his words before the people: and they marvelled at his answer, and held their peace.

The parable of the husbandmen had made its point. *They perceived that he had spoken this parable against them* (v. 19), and their bitterness and antagonism deepened. The question about tribute was the same kind of question as the one about authority (vv. 1-8). The tax about which they asked was a sort of head tax or poll tax and was hated because it symbolized Israel's subjection to Rome. If Jesus favored the tax, He would lose favor with the crowds; if He did not, He could be arrested by the Romans.

1. Jesus said, "Pay the tax," and so endorsed lawful obedience to the state. Jesus was not a political revolutionary. To use the coin of the state and to enjoy the protection and blessings of civil government demand a certain responsibility which the Christian gospel has always advocated. This does not mean that the Christian must uphold the state regardless of the character of its purposes or policies. The biblical point of view is that the principle of ordered government for the preservation of justice is ordained by God. This does not mean that the particular government in power is there because God has specifically willed it. The acceptance, however, of the blessings of government demands a rightful response to the demands of government—part of which has always meant paying taxes.

2. The coin bore Caesar's image, signifying that it belonged to Caesar. Man bears God's image, signifying that he belongs to God. Belonging to God, he lives in a world under the temporal government of "Caesar." Jesus does not divide up life into two neat compartments, one labeled "political" and the other labeled "religious." Every Christian has a sort of double citizenship and is obliged to be

a good citizen in this world even while his ultimate allegiance is to God and not the state. It is a serious thing to oppose the state in the name of God. However, with all the dangers and risks involved, when the demands of the state countermand the demands of God, the Christian must be true to his conscience and obey God rather than man, whatever the cost. He bears God's image and belongs to God, not Caesar.

3. Jesus turned the question back and was not trapped, but the questioners had made their point, too. At His trial in 23:2 the same issue was raised and Jesus was accused of *perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar*. How ironic; the tax that galled them became their weapon to condemn Him!

Temple Conflicts: God and the Resurrection

Luke 20:27-40

27 Then came to him certain of the Sadducees, which deny that there is any resurrection: and they asked him, 28 Saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If any man's brother die, having a wife, and he die without children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. 29 There were therefore seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and died without children. 30 And the second took her to wife, and he died childless. 31 And the third took her; and in like manner the seven also: and they left no children, and died. 32 Last of all the woman died also. 33 Therefore in the resurrection whose wife of them is she? for seven had her to wife. 34 And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: 35 But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: 36 Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. 37 Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. 38 For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him. 39 Then certain of the scribes answering said, Master, thou hast well said. 40 And after that they durst not ask him any question at all.

The Sadducees were the priestly party within Judaism, and the Temple was their home ground. They were aristocratic; many were wealthy and politically influential. They were literalistic in their interpretation of the law and held only to the Pentateuch as the authoritative Word of God. They regarded the whole man as mortal, perishing at death, so they rejected the Pharisees' teaching about the resurrection of the body. Their motive in posing the resurrection question to Jesus was to entangle Him and discredit His teaching and use Him in their ongoing debate with the Pharisees.

1. The hypothetical case of the seven brothers appeals to the old law of levirate

marriage, which provided a legal heir for a man who died without child (Deut. 25:5). In Jesus' time the law was mostly obsolete and the question was an academic one. Sadducees held only to the books of Moses. There is no doctrine of the resurrection in them. The questioners of Jesus sought to show that the levirate law of Moses made a doctrine of the resurrection absurd.

In the Markan parallel, Jesus replied, *Ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God* (Mark 12:24). He dispensed with their exaggerated test case by showing that their illustration was based on false assumptions. The life to come is not this life continued in a better environment. There is a qualitative difference. Our life here comes from procreation; so *the children of this world marry, and are given in marriage* (v. 34). The life to come continually partakes of the life of God. It is resurrection life not subject to death; so, like the life of angels, it is not dependent upon human marriage and birth.

2. Jesus took the question further than His opponents, using their own Scriptures, and by their own methods demonstrated that Moses himself implied a doctrine of the resurrection. God addressed Moses as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The living God is not the God of dead men. Therefore, these righteous men are alive in God.

The hope of resurrection rests on the life and power of the living God, who brings His children into permanent relationship with himself. The relation of the faithful to God is not limited to this life. It reaches into the eternity of God.

Challenge to the Scribes

Luke 20:41—21:4

41 And he said unto them, How say they that Christ is David's son?

42 And David himself saith in the book of Psalms, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, 43 Till I make thine enemies thy footstool.

44 David therefore calleth him Lord, how is he then his son?

45 Then in the audience of all the people he said unto his disciples, 46 Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts;

47 Which devour widows' houses, and for a shew make long prayers: the same shall receive greater damnation.

Chapter 21:

1 And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury.

2 And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites.

3 And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all:

4 For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.

The question about the resurrection brought an end to the series of debates

and a grudging compliment from the scribes. Jesus had answered His critics and they were silent. He then took the occasion to confront the scribes concerning their use of the Scriptures. He challenged them first on the matter of their interpretation of the passage about Messiah as David's Son, and then condemned them for using the Scriptures as a cloak for their covetousness and pride. The section (21:1-4) closes with the poor widow as the example of true godliness.

1. The expectation of the scribes was for a Messiah who was Son of David. That meant not only that He would come in the lineage of David, but that He would be to Israel a new and greater David to conquer their foes, exalt the nation, and glorify Jerusalem as David the king had done.

From their own Scriptures, Jesus showed that, though from one point of view the Messiah was in the lineage of David and so his Son, from a larger point of view, David called this “son” Lord. Messiah, then, is both David's Son and David's Lord, thus not limited to David's lineage or example. It is not King David that furnished Jesus with the pattern of His messiahship. It was rather the suffering servant of the Lord portrayed in the later prophecies of Isaiah (42—53). Jesus would not allow the Jews to limit their ideas of Messiah and the Kingdom to their nationalistic hopes patterned after David's rule.

2. Once again (6:24f.; 18:9-14), Jesus condemned the scribes for their hypocrisy. They were the learned teachers of the Scriptures but they themselves did not bow to the demands of those Scriptures. Their hunger to know the law became a desire to master it and eventuated in a sense of personal power and authority. Their piety was honeycombed with egotism and pride. They used the law like the proverbial net that caught the poor little fish and let the big ones go through. Jesus never failed to declare it: The judgment of God falls on that kind of vanity and avarice and hypocrisy!

3. Some insight into that judgment of God is given in the contrast Jesus drew between the scribes in all their self-centered pretentiousness and the poor widow who cast in her mite (less than a penny). God's judgment reveals the heart, the motive, the inner faith and obedience (1 Sam. 16:7).

This word of Jesus had meaning for the leaders of the Early Church, who perhaps were tempted to make display of service or giving. And leaders of the Church today still are tempted to follow the pattern of the scribes, with robes and rituals, called by men, Doctor, Doctor! The widow still stands as the example of true piety in the eyes of God (6:20-26).

LUKE 21

Between the Times and the Time of the End

Luke 21:5-38

5 And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said, 6 As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

7 And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass?

8 And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them.

9 But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by.

10 Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom:

11 And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven.

12 But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake.

13 And it shall turn to you for a testimony.

14 Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer:

15 For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.

16 And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death.

17 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.

18 But there shall not an hair of your head perish.

19 In your patience possess ye your souls.

20 And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.

21 Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto.

22 For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.

23 But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people.

24 And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

25 And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring;

26 Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.

27 And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

28 And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.

29 And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees;

30 When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand.

31 So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh

at hand.

32 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled.

33 Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.

34 And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.

35 For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.

36 Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

37 And in the day time he was teaching in the temple; and at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives.

38 And all the people came early in the morning to him in the temple, for to hear him.

Jesus taught His disciples that He would die and rise again and return in glory at the end of the age. He also repeatedly warned the Jews that their rejection of Him and His ensuing death would result in the judgment of God upon both their nation and their city. He instructed His disciples that there would be an indeterminate but lengthy period of time between His death-resurrection and His triumphant coming again.

These things were the subject of Jesus' final discourse in the Temple. It has been the subject of endless study and debate among scholars and no single approach or interpretation has taken the field. What is offered here is offered with both great hesitancy and greater certainty: hesitancy in specific interpretation, but great certainty in the reality of the work of God in history, the grace of God to sustain His Church through the periods of trial, and the ultimate triumph of the kingdom of God in the return of Christ at the end of the age.

These great events are separate, yet they are all tied together. The first coming of Christ in the Incarnation carried with it the promise and guarantee of the triumphant Second Coming. The judgment of God upon Jerusalem was both an event in itself and a testimony to the coming judgment upon all the powers of evil. Jesus, in the Temple discourse, talked about the destruction of Jerusalem and the signs that would accompany it. He talked about the Second Coming and the signs that will precede it. He also talked about the times in between, the last days, the days of the Church, and the signs that would characterize them. The Christian lives in these "between times," between the First Coming and the Second Coming. He lives in the last days but before the end of days. He is called to live in faith, trusting God's sustaining power in trial, not knowing *the day nor the hour* (Matt. 25:13), yet discerning the *signs of the times* (Matt. 16:3), and so living expectantly, rejoicing *in hope of the glory of God* (Rom. 5:2).

1. The first section of the discourse (vv. 5-19) was occasioned by a comment on the beauty of the Temple. It was indeed a magnificent structure. Still under

construction, great walls of white stone, some covered with gold, made rich with jewels and gifts. Jesus' solemn reply was a repeat of His prophecies of doom in 13:35 and 19:43-44, *There shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down* (v. 6). It belonged to the old order and had become the symbol of false dependency and false religion. Its time had come.

In answer to the inevitable question, “When?” Jesus replied, not with a date on the calendar, but rather with a “baffling multiplicity of signs” relating to the destruction of the Temple, the end of the age, and the period in between! They did not get inside information on dates, but a challenge to faith, perseverance, and wisdom.

It appears that Jesus first instructed His disciples in the character of the times between His resurrection and the end of the age. Whether that time would be short or long, it would be characterized by deceivers, false christs who would declare that the time of the Second Coming was at hand or already come (as was the case described in 2 Thess. 2:2 f.). Furthermore, the time before the Second Coming would be a time of war and trouble on earth, persecution for the Church, division within families for the sake of the gospel. Believers must not lose heart. The “between time” is a time for trust and a time for testimony. Even in suffering and death the believer will not perish.

2. The next section of the discourse (vv. 20-24) focuses on the first of the great and awful events that foreshadow the end of the age, the destruction of Jerusalem. The city was totally destroyed in A.D. 70 by the Romans. It has been said that if you had not known of the city's existence you would not recognize that it had ever been, so complete was the razing. It was accompanied by dreadful times of persecution and suffering for both Christians and Jews. The city would be *trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled* (v. 24). The saying probably refers to the period of Gentile control and also to the period of grace extended to the Gentiles for the preaching of the gospel. There seems to be some anticipation that the Jews would eventually repossess it.

3. In the closing section (vv. 25-38) Jesus looked out into the future to the time of the Second Coming and the final triumph of the Son of Man. The language used to describe the signs of His coming is highly figurative and probably should not be taken too literally. The same kind of language was used to describe God's judgment on Babylon (Isa. 13:10), Edom (Isa. 34:4), Egypt (Ezek. 32:7), and Israel (Joel 2:10). Cosmic disturbances cannot be eliminated from Jesus' picture

of the end, but the primary reference is probably to terrible national and political upheaval. Though the Christian does not know the day or the hour of Christ's coming, he should know that, when these things come to pass, his final deliverance is soon to come and he can lift up his head. The Son of Man will come *with power and great glory* (v. 27). Wisdom to read the signs of nature should be enough to read the signs of the end. *This generation* (v. 32) perhaps refers to the generation that saw the signs and the destruction of Jerusalem, or the generation that will behold the signs of the end, or the generation of the “between times,” whether that covers one lifetime or many lifetimes. Believers who await the Second Coming and are watchful of the signs see in them the verification of God's unfailing Word. In the meantime disciples are to watch and be ready, not dissipate or grow careless. They will thus be prepared *to stand before the Son of man* (v. 36).

LUKE 22

The Messiah Betrayed

Luke 22:1-6

- 1 Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover.
- 2 And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him; for they feared the people.
- 3 Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve.
- 4 And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them.
- 5 And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money.
- 6 And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude.

The process of the Messiah's rejection is moving to its dreadful climax. The invisible cords of God draw all the characters together for the last act in Luke's drama of redemption. Jesus, Satan, Judas, Peter, the disciples, and the Jews—all are present and act consistent with their characters.

1. All through Luke the process of rejection has been revealed. There was no room for Him in the inn at His birth (2:7); He was rejected in His hometown as He began His ministry (4:28-30); the conflict stories of 5:17—6:11 end with the words, *They were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus* (6:11); in the midst of His teaching, the Pharisees were lying in wait for Him, that they might destroy Him (19: 47); and in the present passage *the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him* (v. 2). They

finally succeeded.

2. Judas, for reasons unknown to us, opened his heart to Satan (John 13:27) and betrayed his Lord. That is, for a price he arranged for the Jewish officials to arrest Jesus at a place and time when the people could not interfere. Luke only hints at his motive (v. 5); John says he was a thief (12:6). Perhaps he was a Zealot who became disillusioned when Jesus did not create a revolutionary movement against Roman occupation. The point Luke makes is that the power of Satan is present to thwart and frustrate the work of Messiah. But the purposes of God move persistently to their fulfillment, and the designs of Satan become the very means through which God accomplishes His redemptive work.

The Last Supper

Luke 22:7-38

- 7 Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed.
- 8 And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the pass-over, that we may eat.
- 9 And they said unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare?
- 10 And he said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in.
- 11 And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?
- 12 And he shall shew you a large upper room furnished: there make ready.
- 13 And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.
- 14 And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him.
- 15 And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer:
- 16 For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.
- 17 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves:
- 18 For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.
- 19 And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.
- 20 Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.
- 21 But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table.
- 22 And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!
- 23 And they began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing.
- 24 And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.
- 25 And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors.
- 26 But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.
- 27 For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth.
- 28 Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations.
- 29 And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me;
- 30 That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve

tribes of Israel.

31 And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:

32 But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

33 And he said unto him. Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.

34 And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.

35 And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing.

36 Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.

37 For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end.

38 And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough.

The third prophetic act of messianic symbolism was the Last Supper. Jesus had previously interpreted His messiahship through the entry into Jerusalem and the cleansing of the Temple. The Passover Feast commemorated the night of the Exodus, when, under the sign of the shed blood, Israel marched out of Egyptian bondage into God's new future. Here, at Passover time, Messiah gathers the new Israel that marches out of the bondage of Satan, free and forgiven, under the sign of the Cross.

1. Jesus' preparation for this Passover was very much like His preparation for the entry into Jerusalem. His instructions were authoritative, deliberate, accurate, and reveal previous arrangements. His obvious planning shows how deeply significant the meal was for Jesus. He intended to spend this Passover time with the Twelve before His death, and approached it with deep desire, both for the intimacy of their fellowship and for the establishment of the covenant relationship with them.

2. It is probable that they shared together a Passover meal which merged with a "Lord's Supper." The Passover Feast marked the end of one dispensation and so Jesus said, *I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God* (v. 16). The Passover commemorated an ancient deliverance. It also looked forward to the future, to the sharing of the heavenly banquet with Messiah. All that Passover meant both in retrospect and anticipation is fulfilled in Jesus the Messiah and symbolized in the supper that He shared with His disciples that night.

And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you (v. 19). The very wording reminds us of the feeding of the 5,000 in Galilee (9:16). John recorded that after that

event Jesus said, *I am the bread of life* (John 6:35). When Jesus here offered His body, what could it mean but that He was offering them His own life? His body was the vehicle through which the sacrifice of His life on their behalf was made. The very life of God was being given them, not held aloof and distant, but broken and distributed for each to share.

3. The old covenant was ratified by the sprinkling of the sacrificial blood (Exod. 24:6-8). On this night, Jesus said, *This cup is the new testament (covenant) in my blood, which is shed for you* (v. 20). Drinking the wine or taking the cup was similar to being sprinkled with the blood as recorded in Exodus 24. It represented the sharing of the blessings and obligations of the new covenant made possible through the sacrificial, self-giving death of Jesus.

The Twelve who shared that last Passover and that first Lord's Supper were ordinary men. One betrayed Him; another denied Him; they all forsook Him. But that night they rose from supper having begun to share the power of the self-offered Christ. They shared the symbol of the sacrifice that Jesus was about to make for all men. We are as human and ordinary and weak as they were; but in Him—His broken body and shed blood—we participate by faith in the very life of our Lord.

4. Jesus' prediction of His betrayal (vv. 21-23) brought fear and confusion to the disciples. Each man there knew that he had within himself the potential for betrayal. Luke does not mention Judas by name, but it is likely that at this point in the supper he left the company (John 13:30).

5. The ministry of Jesus was a ministry of service and self-giving. In the Kingdom there is no place for striving after greatness. The servant role of the Messiah defines the servant role of the disciples. It is through this servant role that the disciples will receive their *kingdoms* and exercise authority (vv. 24-30).

6. Perhaps the thought of ruling in the Kingdom (vv. 29-30) was a special temptation to Peter and the other disciples. Only through the intercession of Christ would they be able to keep their faith in the coming trauma. Peter, in his bold proclamation, and in his subsequent denial, is representative of the whole group. Jesus was forsaken by all (Isa. 53:3).

The closing words of Jesus to His disciples (vv. 35-38) reflect a new and somber note. Conditions were to suddenly change for them. Those who would take the life of Jesus would not deal kindly with His followers! His word concerning the swords was probably a parable that was misunderstood by His disciples. In answer to their word, *Here are two swords*, Jesus replied, "Enough

of that,” or, “*Enough, enough!*” (v. 38, NEB). The One who willingly gave himself to die for men conquered by love. He will not have His followers live by violence.

The Messiah Rejected

Luke 22:39-71

39 And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him.

40 And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation.

41 And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, 42 Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.

43 And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.

44 And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

45 And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow, 46 And said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.

47 And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him.

48 But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?

49 When they which were about him saw what would follow, they said unto him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword?

50 And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear.

51 And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him.

52 Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to him, Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves?

53 When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness.

54 Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off.

55 And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them.

56 But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him.

57 And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not.

58 And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not.

59 And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilaean.

60 And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew.

61 And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.

62 And Peter went out and wept bitterly.

63 And the men that held Jesus mocked him, and smote him.

64 And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote thee?

65 And many other things blasphemously spake they against him.

66 And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and led him into their council, saying, 67 Art thou the Christ? tell us. And he said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe:

68 And if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go.

69 Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God.

70 Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am.

71 And they said, What need we any further witness? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth.

The group moved from the Upper Room, out the city gates, across the Kidron valley, and up the slopes of the Mount of Olives, to their encampment at the olive press, the Garden of Gethsemane. It was there that Jesus was arrested and taken to the house of the high priest. All through this passage Luke shows both the real humanness of Jesus and His steady commitment to His Father's will. He stands in vivid contrast to the wavering and fickle loyalty of His followers and the desperate, irrational behavior of His enemies.

1. As they approached the garden, a sense of desolation settled down on Jesus. He walked ahead of them *and kneeled down, and prayed, saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done* (vv. 41-42). The followers of Jesus, in later years of persecution, faced their deaths with joyful abandon. Jesus was braver than all the martyrs, yet Martin Luther said, "No one ever feared death so much as this man." What was the agony of His soul behind His cry to the Father? Not just the fear of physical death; rather, the full and awful awareness of what death really means as the result of sin. In that hour He took to himself the burden of the horror and desolation of the sin of the world.

The doubled force of all the temptations that He had ever faced now descended upon Him. The road He had followed, the path on which He had placed His feet at His baptism had led Him inevitably to this hour. The reality of death confronted Him with awful immediacy. *Remove this cup*. Yet from Him another word is heard; it is the word of trust and surrender to the Father's will, *Not my will, but thine, be done* (v. 42). In that hour He consecrated himself to death. He did it in the conviction that His death was in the Father's redemptive will and that through it men would be delivered from death to life.

A man does not pray, "Not my will, but thine, be done," in the great Gethsemane of his experience if he has not been praying it through all the other trials and decisions of his life. Twice in this passage (vv. 40, 46) Jesus referred to the temptations His disciples would face and called them to watchful prayer. Jesus met and endured His own temptations through prayer. He knew how much

His followers needed to watch and pray, that they be not swallowed up in temptations. I read somewhere that when God wanted to create the worlds He spoke the word and it was done. But when God wanted to make bad people into good people, when He wanted to make sinners into saints, the Son of God came to earth and sweat great drops of blood and went to Calvary's cross to die. God's way of dealing with the evil of our world is by himself entering fully into the human situation. He takes to himself our sin and guilt and suffering and loneliness and tragedy, and identifies himself with us all the way to death. This is the final commitment Jesus made in Gethsemane.

2. Judas knew that it was Jesus' habit to go to Gethsemane for prayer and rest. It was there, in the darkness, backed by the Temple guards, that Judas, with the kiss of discipleship, betrayed his Lord. The friends of Jesus had not yet comprehended the meaning of His mission and in blundering, confused loyalty they drew their swords to fight. In one last compassionate act of mercy, Jesus healed the wound caused by their violent outburst. With swords and staves His enemies came in the night to drag away the Man of Peace. He had healed their sick, given sight to their blind and strength to their lame. He had spoken God's word of grace and forgiveness. It was indeed their hour and the dark power was having its way. Satan's force was straining toward its climax and the night was dark.

3. Who does not understand the story of Peter's denial? He had made his promise of loyalty in all honesty and sincerity (v. 33). He had been cautioned about his weakness and of Satan's desire to sift him (v. 31). He had been warned of the dangers of this night and told that he would not keep his promise (v. 34). Yet he trusted in his own strength and he failed. In that failure he represented not only the other disciples who had fled, but all disciples who have denied their Lord through fear and cowardice. His sin is different from the sin of Judas. Yet not too different. The salvation of Peter was not that his sin was less serious, or that he was morally superior. It was that he remembered and repented and found grace. No part of the gospel drama is charged with more emotion than the conclusion of this episode: *And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered ...* (v. 61).

4. The night hours were spent at the house of the high priest in a private and unofficial examination. They had Jesus in their power to gloat over, to abuse and make sport of. In the early morning they took Him before the Sanhedrin. It was the supreme court of the Jews, composed of 70 members of priests, Sadducees,

Pharisees, scribes, rabbis, and elders. In Jesus' time the Sanhedrin had the highest religious and political authority in Judaism, but could not carry out the death penalty without the consent of the Roman authorities.

At His trial before the Sanhedrin, the issue was Jesus' messiahship. He knew that the court was not open to hear or ready to discuss. He was condemned before the group even convened. He answered them in a way that both revealed to them His messiahship and at the same time made it clear that His messiahship was not an earthly, political role, but a spiritual one that exercised its triumph in the power of God alone. He was Messiah, but He did not fulfill their nationalistic messianic expectations, so He answered in a cryptic manner. But they heard Him and understood Him and charged Him with blasphemy. Jesus stood in tragic solitude before the representatives of official Judaism. God's own Son was among them with power to heal and save and redeem, but there was no room, no place, no openness to Him. The nation God intended to be a channel had now become a dam holding back the flow of His grace to the whole world. The rich prophetic heritage was lost through self-centered concern for an ecclesiastical system.

The logic of the Sanhedrin was sound. Their verdict was false and the sentence was Satan-inspired, but at least they knew the real issues. To be a teacher, healer, and good man is one thing; this is tolerable even if one is a heretic of sorts. To claim to be the Son of God, to claim to act in the power and authority of God, is quite another. They knew that their everlasting alternatives were either write Jesus off as a blasphemer and kill Him, or bow down and worship Him as Lord and Master.

These are still the alternatives. He claimed to heal and teach in the very power of God. He claimed that through His healing and teaching God was acting among men, judging their sin, saving them, and calling them to total obedience. His claims were backed by the power of God that raised Him from the dead. What He claimed is either true or He is a blasphemer.

LUKE 23

Trial Before Pilate

Luke 23:1-25

1 And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate.

2 And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King.

3 And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answered him and said, Thou sayest it.
4 Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man.
5 And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place.
6 When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilaean.
7 And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time.
8 And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him.
9 Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing.
10 And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him.
11 And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate.
12 And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves.
13 And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, 14 Said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him:
15 No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him.
16 I will therefore chastise him, and release him.
17 (For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast.)
18 And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas:
19 (Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison.)
20 Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them.
21 But they cried, saying Crucify him, crucify him.
22 And he said unto them the third time. Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go.
23 And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed.
24 And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required.
25 And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will.

Jesus recognized a divine necessity in His sufferings and death. He consecrated himself to the way of the Cross in the knowledge that it was in the will of His Father. In this episode are seen the historical outworkings of that will, involving both the Jewish nation and the Roman Empire. In and through the ambitious pride and fearful cowardice of men, God works His salvation through His Son, who goes to His triumph through suffering. Jesus was finally rejected by all: His friends, His countrymen, His nation, and His world. He stood alone on trial. Yet the factors that brought Him to that place are the very ones that play upon the attitudes and decisions of every man: unbelief, jealousy, fear, pride, hatred, expediency, and indifference. It turns out that His trial reveals the

motives of His judges, and we all see ourselves in His accusers.

1. The trial before the Sanhedrin was religious and the issue was Jesus' claim to be Messiah. The result was the charge of blasphemy, and the penalty was death. Rome had power to execute a criminal, but no Roman court was concerned about local religious quarrels. Therefore Jesus was brought before Pilate with the accusation of treason, not of blasphemy. There is a terrible irony in the whole situation. All through His life the Jews had wanted Jesus to be a political messiah but He would not conform to their desires. He was their spiritual King, and for that they charged Him with blasphemy. In front of Pilate, however, they laid on Him the threefold charge: “*subverting our nation, opposing the payment of taxes to Caesar, and claiming to be Messiah, a King*” (v. 2, NEB). The accusers knew full well that this was precisely the kind of messiah He had refused to be.

2. Jesus responded to the question of Pilate but He never said a word to Herod. Here was the man who put John the Baptist to death to save face at a banquet, the man who wanted Jesus to do some miracle. For him, Jesus was a spectacle, an item of interest. Jesus had no answer for his question, no magic for his curiosity. As if to mock His messianic claim, Herod dressed Him in a gorgeous robe and sent Him back to Pilate.

3. What can be said for Pilate? He had been governor of Judea for several years, a stern, practical man with all the Roman contempt for religious superstition. He lived in the day when, as Gibbon has said, all religions were considered by the people to be equally true, by the philosophers as equally false, and by the politicians as equally useful. Though he had some sense of justice, the history of his rulership was a series of misdeeds and blunders with careless shedding of blood and careless scorn for the ideals and customs of the Jews. He feared his Roman masters and hated his Jewish subjects.

He knew the Jews had charged Jesus falsely and three times he protested His innocence. But he never spoke authoritatively, he never acted decisively. John gives insight to the pressures he felt by recording the threat of the Jews: *If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend* (John 19:12).

It was customary to grant amnesty to a prisoner during the feast. The call of the crowd to release Barabbas only intensified the irony of the trial. Jesus was going to die because He was falsely accused of insurrection; Barabbas, the insurrectionist, was going to be free. Pilate could withstand no longer; their voices prevailed. He released Barabbas, *but he delivered Jesus to their will* (v.

25). Later disciples saw in the actions of Pilate and Herod the fulfillment of the Old Testament scriptures. In Acts 4:25-28, Luke records the prayer of the apostles in which the two are mentioned in relation to Psalm 2: *The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed* (Ps. 2:2).

The Crucifixion

Luke 23:26-56

26 And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus.

27 And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him.

28 But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.

29 For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck.

30 Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.

31 For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?

32 And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death.

33 And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

34 Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

35 And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God.

36 And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, 37 And saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself.

38 And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

39 And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.

40 But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?

41 And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.

42 And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.

43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

44 And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.

45 And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.

46 And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.

47 Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man.

48 And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned.

49 And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things.

50 And, behold, there was a man named Joseph, a counsellor; and he was a good man, and a just:
51 (The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them;) he was of Arimathea, a city of the Jews: who also himself waited for the kingdom of God.
52 This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus.
53 And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid.
54 And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on.
55 And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid.
56 And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment.

Luke began his Gospel by showing how the coming of Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah. He closes it in the same way. The narratives of the Passion and the Resurrection are filled with quotations and allusions to the Old Testament promises. In His death-resurrection, Jesus brings to consummation the promise of the new age. His death is a new beginning, and though the presence of evil continues, its power is broken. Even from the Cross, He “opens the gates of paradise.” His death is not the end; it is the beginning of the Kingdom come in power reaching out to all the earth. That story is told in the Book of Acts.

1. The road to Calvary (vv. 26-31) was a long, tortuous one. Luke does not mention the scourging that took place before the Crucifixion (Mark 15:15). It was an extremely severe lashing under which some men died. Probably Simon of Cyrene was pressed into service to carry the crossbar of Jesus because Jesus was physically unable to bear it all the way. Mark (15:21) mentions that he was the father of Alexander and Rufus, the latter a well-known Christian in the Roman church at the time Mark was written (cf. Rom. 16:13). Was it at this time that Simon became a believer? In Luke's narrative, he becomes a kind of symbol of those who take up the cross and follow Jesus.

The crowds made no protest at Christ's trial, but now they mourn and bewail His fate. Jesus' word to the lamenting women is not a rebuke, but rather the occasion of His own final lament for His people and the destruction of Jerusalem. It was unthinkable to them that childlessness would ever be a blessing, but the coming days would be awful beyond comprehension. The quoted proverb probably means: If you are weeping now at the coming death of one innocent Man, what will it be like when the guilty nation falls to judgment?

2. The narrative of the Crucifixion (vv. 32-38) is told with great restraint and simplicity. They put Him on a cross between two thieves and He prayed—all through His life He had prayed—*Father, forgive them; for they know not what*

they do (v. 34). Someone said that the picture of Jesus hanging between two thieves is a revelation of the fact that the world treats its saints and its criminals in pretty much the same way. Through all His ministry Jesus had associated with sinners; He finally died with them and for them, and prayed for forgiveness for His enemies. In this He was followed by Stephen, the first martyr, who died testifying to the vision of his risen Lord and praying the prayer his Lord prayed on the Cross (Acts 7:56, 60).

The passage is filled with references to Old Testament scriptures and so relates the death of Jesus to the saving purposes of God. *He was numbered with the transgressors* (Isa. 53:12). The lament of Ps. 22:18 speaks of the enemies who *part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture* (23:34). Ps. 69:21 speaks of enemies who *in my thirst ... gave me vinegar to drink* (23:26).

Most of what had been said at the trials of Jesus was false. The whole thing, from first to last, was built on lies. Judas, Peter, the witnesses, the high priest, the crowd, and Pilate, all had lied. Jesus hung on the Cross because of their lies. And yet, in their taunts, they were telling the truth! They derided Him with messianic titles—which were true: the Christ, the chosen of God, the King of the Jews. The Jewish leaders expressed their taunts in a way that in fact summed up the whole truth about Jesus: *He saved others; himself he cannot save* (Matt. 27:42). The “Man for others” could not save himself.

3. The two thieves (vv. 39-43) represent the two contrasting attitudes of the people toward Jesus on the Cross. For some, it was unthinkable that Messiah should die such a death; Jesus was, then, obviously a blasphemer. Others saw, and waited and trusted the power of God at work in Him. Even the sight of approaching death did not break the rigid heart of the first thief. A. M. Fairbairn writes that he “mocked with the mockers, felt no sanctity in death, no awe in his presence, no evil in sin; dared, though stained with many a crime, to associate with the stainless, and demand with cool profanity, ‘Save thyself and us’!”

The other thief, in penitent trust, said simply, “*Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingly power*” (v. 42, RSV). The response of Jesus was immediate, *To day shalt thou be with me in paradise* (v. 43). Whatever the meaning that *paradise* had for Jesus, one thing is very clear: In Jesus on the Cross, salvation is present. He indeed opened the gates of paradise in His triumphant death. The penitent thief need wait for no far-off, longed-for dream. In Jesus the salvation of God was present, today, granting immediate entrance into life. Someone has written that one thief was saved on the cross that none might despair, and only one that none might presume.

4. The Crucifixion began at nine o'clock in the morning. It was from noon until three in the afternoon that there was darkness over the land (vv. 44-49). Jesus had predicted that the judgment day would be preceded by signs in the heavens (21:25 ff.). Perhaps these signs were prefigured in these that accompanied the death of Jesus. His death was the decisive battle with the forces of evil and ultimately spelled their doom. The *hour, and the power of darkness* (22:53) were manifesting their final domination. Easter morning would show the triumphant breakthrough of the light.

One of the important motifs in Luke's Gospel is the Temple. John Baptist was born, as one expressed it, "from the sterile womb of the temple" (1:5 ff.). Jesus was dedicated there (2:21 ff.); His parents found Him there when He was 12 years of age (2:41 ff.); He was tempted to manifest His messiahship there (4:9 ff.); He challenged it, cleansed it, wept over it, and predicted its awful destruction, and spent His last week teaching in its courtyards. It was Israel's holy of holies, the place where God met man. But the holy of holies was sealed off by a great curtain and entered only once a year, on the Day of Atonement, by the high priest when sacrifice was offered for the sins of the nation. At the death of Jesus, this veil or curtain was torn apart from the top to the bottom. It was a foretoken of the fact that the Temple would be destroyed (21:5-6). It also was a sign that the way into the holy of holies, or the presence of God, was now open to all—not through the priestly rites of men, but through God's own Messiah. The veil between God and man is removed through the dying of the Son of God (Heb. 10:19-20).

The dying cry of Jesus faded into a prayer of commitment and trust. The Sufferer-Redeemer endured anguish and desolation, but He bore it in the faith and submission expressed in the old psalm He had known from childhood: *Into thine hand I commit my spirit* (Ps. 31:5).

The centurion looking on was shaken to the depths. In contrast to the mocking crowds, his cry reflected deep reverence and spiritual insight, *Certainly this was a righteous man* (v. 47). He became a prefigure of the Gentiles who would later embrace the gospel universally offered through the death of Christ.

5. The reverent burial given to Jesus (vv. 51-56) reflects the care Jewish people gave to their dead. Joseph of Arimathaea took pains to see that Jesus had a decent burial. A rich member of the Sanhedrin, he yet was one with those in Israel like Zacharias and Elisabeth, Anna and Simeon, Joseph and Mary (Luke 1—2), who looked in faith for the coming of the Kingdom. John indicates that his companion was Nicodemus (19:38-40) and that they spread spices on the shroud

as they wrapped the body of Jesus. The women watched and noted the place, so they could complete the embalming when the Sabbath day had passed (23:55-56).

It was the *hour, and the power of darkness* (22:53).

LUKE 24

The Resurrection

Luke 24:1-12

1 Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them.

2 And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre.

3 And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus.

4 And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments:

5 And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead?

6 He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, 7 Saying, the Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.

8 And they remembered his words, 9 And returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest.

10 It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles.

11 And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.

12 Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.

Luke gives special emphasis to both the birth and the resurrection of Jesus. The meaning of each is to be found, not simply in the event itself, but in the interpretation given to it in the Scriptures. Luke is concerned to show the real entrance of God into human history through the birth of Jesus the Messiah, and he is concerned to show the real death and bodily resurrection of Jesus. All of these—birth, death, resurrection—are climactic in the redemptive purposes of God revealed in the Scriptures.

The Resurrection is, of course, the crucial event in salvation history. This is clearly shown in the special treatment Luke gives it in the Gospel and also in the Book of Acts, where the central task of the young Church is to bear witness to the reality of the Resurrection.

1. The Resurrection took everyone involved by complete and profound surprise. They had all been instructed by Jesus himself about His death and resurrection,

but their utterly hopeless sorrow blinded them to any real vision and closed their minds to anything but the present pain of an entombed Master and a lost cause. The women came in love but they came without hope and without faith. Jesus had promised to rise again, but on that early Sunday morning they came to perform the belated embalming of His precious dead body.

a. And what of the stone? “*Who will roll away the stone for us from the door of the tomb?*” (Mark 16:3, RSV). And what of the weight of despair that covered the dried springs of faith and hope? The stone that closed that grave was a gravestone—the stone that finally covers us all. Halford Luccock wrote, “There is always a terrible finality about gravestones. But it is a deceptive finality. No stone is ever the last act when it is rolled up against any event in which God has a part.” Nor was the stone the last act here. *They found the stone rolled away from the tomb* (24:2, RSV).

b. The empty tomb is the necessary prologue to the reality of the Resurrection. The heart of the Christian faith is not an empty grave but a risen Lord. Luke himself shows that the empty grave itself did not produce faith (24:4, 11-12, 23-24). His emphasis is upon the interpretive word, *He is ... risen* (v. 6). The mighty power of God raised His Servant-Messiah from the dead in climactic fulfillment of His purposes expressed in the Scriptures (vv. 26-27) and in the words of Jesus himself (9:22; 18:33).

c. The shining brilliance of the two men at the empty tomb stands in contrast to the darkness of the hour of Jesus' betrayal and death (22:53; 23:44). Their purpose was to proclaim the resurrection of Jesus as He had foretold it (9:22). At the Transfiguration (9:28 ff.), which was a “pre-figuration” of the Resurrection, Jesus was accompanied by two men who interpreted His coming death in accordance with the Scriptures. At His ascension (Acts 1:10) two men sent the disciples back to Jerusalem, having given them the promise of His coming again.

2. The women told it all to the others but it was like nonsense to them and they did not believe (v. 11). Among the group was Peter. The last mention of his name was at the trial of Jesus, when, after vehemently denying his Lord, *Peter went out, and wept bitterly* (22:62). He did not break fellowship with the group, he did not despair, and he was saved. He saw the empty tomb, viewed the linen cloths, but faith had not yet grasped the Resurrection reality.

The Emmaus Road

Luke 24:13-35

13 And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from

Jerusalem about threescore furlongs.

14 And they talked together of all these things which had happened.

15 And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.

16 But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.

17 And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?

18 And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?

19 And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people:

20 And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him.

21 But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done.

22 Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre;

23 And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive.

24 And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not.

25 Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken:

26 Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?

27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

28 And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further.

29 But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them.

30 And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.

31 And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.

32 And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?

33 And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, 34 Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.

35 And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.

All the Gospel records of the Resurrection emphasize two great realities: the empty tomb and the appearances of the risen Jesus to His disciples. This beautiful narrative portrays the manner of His appearance to Cleopas and his nameless companion. It is found only in Luke and is significant for the purpose of his Gospel. It is a story that discloses the post-Crucifixion thoughts of the disciples about Jesus; it shows the witness of the Old Testament Scriptures to Jesus; and it gives a table-fellowship revelation of Jesus.

1. The two disciples were *conversing and discussing* (v. 15, NASB) the Crucifixion and the rumors of resurrection when *Jesus himself drew near, and went with them* (v. 15). Their response to His questions revealed the total loss of hope. They continued to remember Jesus as *a prophet mighty in deed and word* (v. 19) but not as the Messiah who would redeem Israel (v. 21). How tragic the words that expressed their despair, *We had hoped* (v. 21, RSV). Perhaps it was their total loss of hope that blinded their eyes. Even the women's reports of the message of the angels could not penetrate the pall that hung over them.

2. The Stranger chided them for their lack of understanding of the Scriptures and their consequent lack of faith. It was because they did not know the Scriptures that their messianic hopes were false and thus unfulfilled. So beginning at Moses, Jesus began to expound their Old Testament Scriptures concerning himself and His messiahship. This is the very method later used by the disciples in their own proclamation of the gospel. The heart of Jesus' exposition was that God's Messiah was a suffering Messiah, achieving His triumph through humiliation and death. As leader and representative of God's people Israel, the Messiah must embody in himself their mission. God created Israel a holy, servant people to minister in a world opposed to His will. The fulfillment of that ministry would involve them in humiliation and suffering. The Messiah's mission, embodying Israel's mission, must needs take the same path of humiliation and death. His resurrection gives meaning to the whole mission of Jesus. It consummates the victory and certifies the ultimate triumph of God by means of suffering love. The Messiah, through suffering, enters His glory (v. 26).

3. The evening came as they approached their home and their burning hearts would not let Him go. The Stranger complied with their invitation to stay with them. As they were eating, our Lord *took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them* (v. 30). These were the very words used at the feeding of the 5,000 (9:16) and in the Upper Room (22:19). They knew that familiar, beloved Form; their eyes were opened to see what their burning hearts had felt. Their report to the others back in Jerusalem expressed the reality experienced through the centuries by the Church in the sacraments, *He was known of them in breaking of bread* (v. 35). The risen Christ revealed himself in the Scriptures and in the fellowship of the broken bread. Eyes instructed in the Scriptures are open to see the risen Christ in the sacraments.

With the Disciples in Jerusalem

Luke 24:36-49

36 And as they thus spake. Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.
37 But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.
38 And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?
39 Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.
40 And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet.
41 And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat?
42 And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb.
43 And he took it, and did eat before them.
44 And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.
45 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, 46 And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:
47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.
48 And ye are witnesses of these things.
49 And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.

Only one great reality was able to break through the persistent doubt and fear of the disciples to convince them of the Resurrection fact; that was the great reality of the risen Christ himself. In a passage very similar to John 20:19 ff., Luke records the manifestation of Jesus to the gathered disciples in Jerusalem. He revealed himself as the same Jesus they had known and loved in their years together before the Crucifixion. He opened their hearts to the Scriptures, commissioned them, and promised them the presence of the Holy Spirit.

1. Jesus appeared in the group as suddenly as He had vanished from the home of the two at Emmaus. He offered himself to them, not as a ghost, but as the same real Person they had previously known. His deliberate physical manifestations were not displays for their curiosity. They give us, as Earle Ellis writes, “insight into the ‘manner’ of Jesus’ victory. The resurrected Jesus is characterized by both ‘glory’ and ‘flesh’ (vv. 26, 39).” He was the same real, live Person they knew who could touch them and eat with them. But He transcended His physical limitations and moved at will in and out of their presence.

The risen Jesus is therefore not simply a “spiritual being” who reveals the triumph of spirit over matter. Nor is He the materialization of the inner spiritual experience of His presence. He came by real birth into our real human situation, He died a real death, and by the power of God He experienced a real resurrection

that included the glorifying of His total being, body and spirit. In His resurrection is the hope for man in the totality of His personal being.

2. His real presence convinced them of resurrection fact; they needed the opening of their minds to the Scriptures to comprehend resurrection meaning (v. 45). He had spoken to the two on the Emmaus road about the nature of His messianic vocation as Suffering Servant. He emphasized the same theme to the group in the Upper Room.

Jesus the Saviour entered fully into the desperate, sinful human situation with power and grace and love, doing the very works of God and proclaiming in His deeds and words the presence of God's kingly reign. He did this as God's Servant-Messiah, taking the path of suffering love, utterly involving himself with us, going all the way to death. God works out His purposes in our sinful world, not by a magic stroke of omnipotence, but by himself, in Christ, coming all the way down into our helpless condition in infinite, redeeming love. The glorious truth of the Resurrection is that God's suffering love revealed on the Cross is ultimately triumphant. It means that, beyond all the very worst that the power of sin can do, the mighty power of God can bring life and hope again. If the Cross is the symbol of God's loving involvement with us all the way to death, the Resurrection is His eternal promise that His love can outreach the longest stretch of hate, His light can pierce the darkest night of sorrow, and His life can break the very bands of death and give new life again.

It was in the context of the “triumph of suffering love” revealed in the Resurrection that Jesus commissioned them to preach *his name among all nations* (v. 47). The servant is not above his Lord. The preaching of repentance and forgiveness was the suffering servant task of John Baptist; it was the task of Jesus, and now the task of disciples. It is in and through suffering love that the Word is to be proclaimed; it is in the power of the Cross that it triumphs; it is in the reality of the Resurrection that its hope is guaranteed.

3. Jesus' bodily presence, He told them, would be replaced by the presence of the Holy Spirit. He who was foretold by the Spirit, conceived by the Spirit, filled with the Spirit, who performed miracles in the power of the Spirit and rejoiced in the Spirit, promised the coming of that same Spirit to the disciples in accordance with the Father's will. The disciples' task is the extension of the Servant's task—for its fulfillment there is the presence and empowerment of the Servant's Spirit.

Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you (v. 49). In Acts 1:5, Luke identifies the promise as the one made through John the Baptist, *He shall baptize*

you with the Holy Ghost and with fire (Luke 3:16). At Pentecost, when the promise was fulfilled, Peter related the whole event to the promise made through Joel.

And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit (2:28-29).

The promise, then, is an ancient one and fulfills the longings of the old and broken covenant and actualizes the new covenant promised through Jeremiah.

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more (31:31-34).

It was Jesus himself who lived out the meaning of this new covenant word of God. All that had been anticipated by the old covenant, all that was envisioned in the pouring out of the Spirit, was graciously embodied in the obedient life of our Lord Jesus, who lived by the power of the Spirit of God.

Now this promise of the Spirit was to become a living reality in the lives of these disciples of Jesus. Through the Spirit they would both participate in the new covenant and become proclaimers of its message of repentance and forgiveness.

The promised power of the Spirit is the dynamic of life in the new covenant. It is also the power to proclaim the gospel even as it was proclaimed by the Servant-Messiah. It cannot, then, be separated from the servant mission of suffering love (see verse 2 above).

It is only in the power of the Spirit that the new covenant can be lived out in us. It is only in the promised endowment that we can in fact take up the cross and follow the Servant's way. It is only through the Spirit that the gospel of repentance and forgiveness can be proclaimed with effectual force.

The disciples' task is the extension of the Servant's task, and for its fulfillment there is the presence and the power of the Servant's Spirit.

The Ascension

Luke 24:50-53

50 And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them.

51 And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into

heaven.

52 And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy:

53 And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.

The Ascension is very significant to the plan and purpose of Luke's Gospel and the Book of Acts. It means the exaltation of Jesus, the risen Lord, to the right hand of the Father in power and glory. It means that Jesus Christ is the risen Lord. Redemption is complete. The suffering Messiah has entered His glory and has promised to come again (Acts 1:11).

1. The Ascension also prepares for the coming of the promised Holy Spirit. When the Spirit came upon the disciples in fulfillment of Jesus' promise on the Day of Pentecost, it certified to them that Jesus was indeed the exalted, triumphant Lord (Acts 2:33). It was in the power of the Spirit of Jesus that they convincingly proclaimed the lordship of Jesus, their risen, victorious, coming Saviour.

2. The Gospel ends as it began, with praise in the Temple. The disciples returned to the old buildings, but they knew themselves to be a new temple, the people of the new covenant, the body of Christ, the Church.

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